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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JULY 10 & 17, 2000

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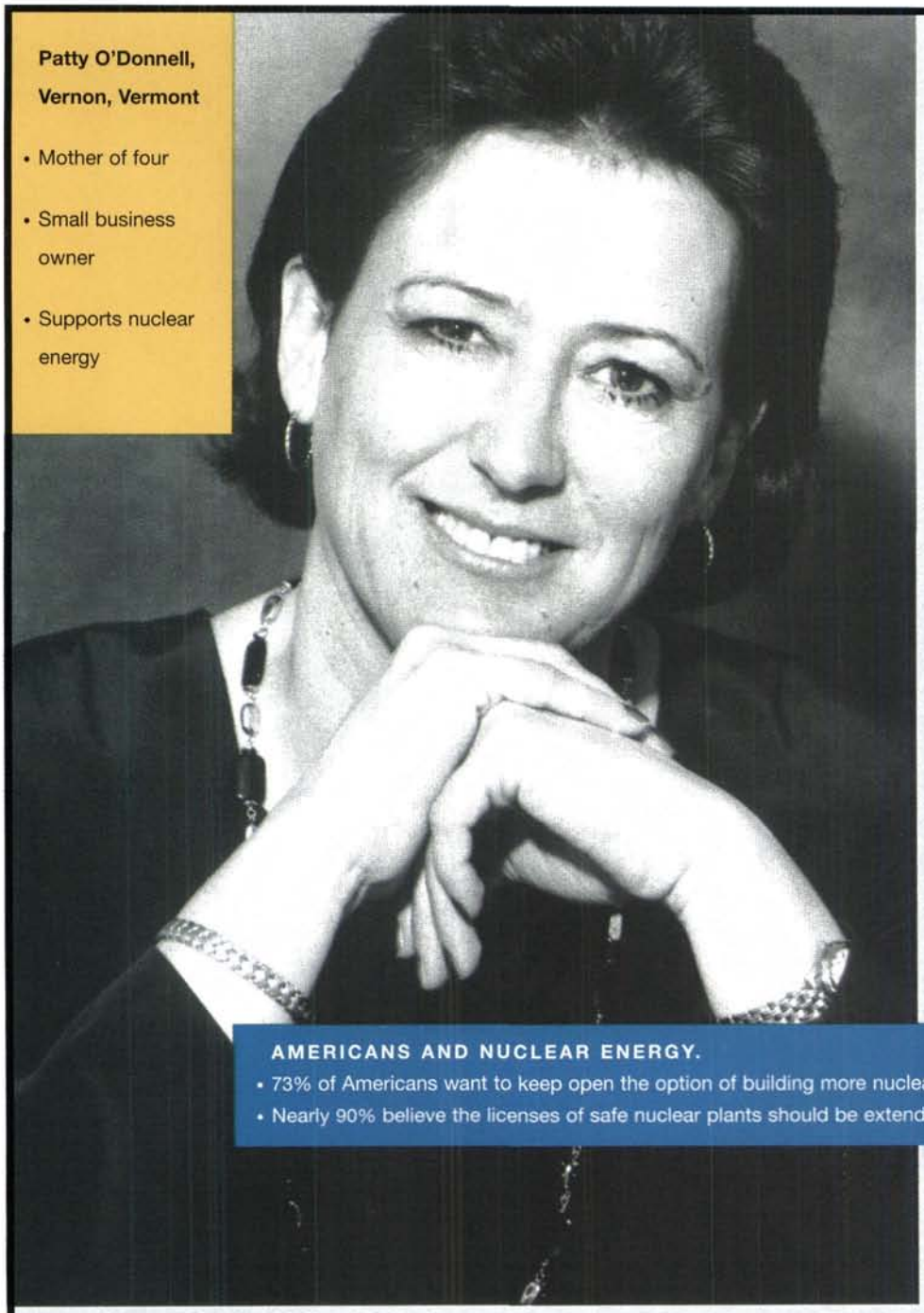
Patty O'Donnell,
Vernon, Vermont

- Mother of four
- Small business owner
- Supports nuclear energy



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4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Are there too many Americans? &c.

6 **WILLIAM SALETAN** TRB: WITCH HINT Robert Ray stoops to Hillary's level.

9 **THE EDITORS** THE BIG TEST Genes, the genius of science, and the need for politics.

10 **NOTEBOOK** South Africa betrays Zimbabwe, the FEC betrays itself, &c.

12 **JONATHAN CHAIT** SLICK RALPHIE Is Ralph Nader this year's Bill Clinton?

14 **BRUCE GOTTLIEB** FRIENDS LIKE THESE Why Gore needed an independent counsel.

15 **VINCE BEISER** WINDOW ROCK DISPATCH: BOYZ ON THE REZ The new crime problem.

16 **JEFFREY ROSEN** PRIDE AND PREJUDICE What do the Rehnquist Court and the Warren Court have in common? Arrogance.

18 **SILVANA PATERNOSTRO** SEXUAL REVOLUTION How prostitution, once Fidel Castro's ticket to a stronger regime, became a form of political dissent.

23 **DAVID GRANN** CRIMETOWN USA Twenty years ago, the feds accused James Traficant of corruption, and he not only beat the rap—he rode his fame to Congress. Now they're closing in on him again, and Youngstown is once again rallying to his defense. A story of the FBI, a congressman, and a city that fell in love with the mob.

32 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: WELL, NOT COMPLETELY LOST The musical version of *Love's Labour's Lost* doesn't swing.

33 **JOHN BUTT** THE SAINT JOHANN SEBASTIAN PASSION *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician* by Christoph Wolff

38 **LEE SIEGEL** SURVIVAL OF THE MISFITTEST *Blonde* by Joyce Carol Oates

44 **CHARLES LARMORE** THE GEIST MAN *Hegel* by Terry Pinkard

48 **C. DALE YOUNG** POEM *The Steps of Positano*

50 **MICHELLE COTTLE** WASHINGTON DIARIST: ROOTS

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The past isn't past

TO THE EDITORS:

I agree with Emily Eakin that Arianna Huffington has been unfairly criticized for refashioning herself as a free-spending, socially conscious progressive ("The New New Her," June 5). Poverty-fighting organizations should not allow Huffington's "lurid past" to deter them from accepting her largesse. I do not hesitate to check out a book from a Carnegie library or attend a concert underwritten by the Ford Foundation because I find repugnant the excesses of rapacious capitalism.

Eakin, however, is mistaken to chastise journalists for questioning Vice President Al Gore's "conversion" on abortion rights and former Senator Bill Bradley's embrace of ethanol subsidies after years spent opposing such corporate welfare. Many voting studies have concluded that most Americans are "retrospective voters" who base their judgments about presidential candidates on the candidates' and their parties' past policy positions and performance. Since voters seek to make accurate forecasts of candidates' performance in office on the basis of limited, imperfect information, fidelity to past positions is a virtue in presidential candidates. Candidates who oscillate between contradictory positions over time thus pose a threat to democratic accountability.

RONALD P. SEYB
Associate Professor of Government
Skidmore College
Saratoga Springs, New York

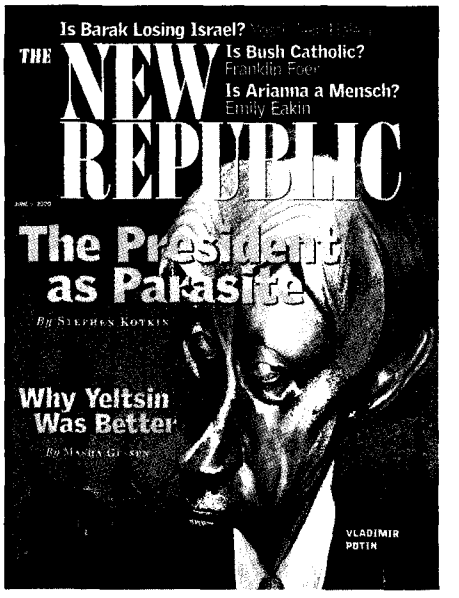
Resigned

TO THE EDITORS:

Your Notebook item "Border Wars" (June 5) unfairly criticizes noted ecologist David Brower for resigning from the Sierra Club's board of directors over the organization's refusal to address immigration as an environmental issue. In highlighting immigration's role in population growth and resource depletion, Brower remains a true friend of the environment.

Despite technological advances, the number of humans will ultimately overwhelm our ecosystems as the health of our environment continues to deteriorate. The only way we will solve the global problem of overpopulation is if each nation adopts a population policy that addresses its unique environmental, social, cultural, and economic factors. In developing nations, the problem is high fertility rates; in the United States, immigration is responsible for the majority of our annual population increase.

How can THE NEW REPUBLIC "salute" the Sierra Club for the environmentally irresponsible position of ignoring immigration as a contributor to U.S. population growth? With immigration adding more than 1,000,000 people to the United States each year, burying our heads in the sand and hoping that the resulting crowding, traffic congestion, and suburban sprawl will just go away is simply not in the best interests of our environment.



SHARON MCCLOE STEIN
Executive Director
Negative Population Growth
Washington, D.C.

Grace under pressure

TO THE EDITORS:

Congratulations to Franklin Foer for an astute analysis of the neoconservative religious rightists, Roman and Robertsonian ("Spin Doctrine," June 5). For all their self-proclaimed orthodoxy, Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Novak are in direct contradiction of papal teaching—even their beloved John Paul II—when they fail to acknowledge the responsibility of all institutions (unions, corporations, and, yes, governments) to serve the common good and exercise the principle of preferential option for the poor. Neither they nor Texas Governor George W. Bush can sneak the dismantling of the welfare state inside the Trojan horse of subsidiarity.

THOMAS ROGERS
Tucson, Arizona

TO THE EDITORS:

Franklin Foer's mention of several concepts that, he seems to think, are central to Catholic social teaching merits a word of clarification. The principle of subsidiarity is unquestionably rock-bottom, thor-

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oughly vintage Catholic teaching. The same goes for those other old favorites, solidarity and the common good. Yet not one of these concepts alone, nor even all of them together, would suffice to confer on any particular theology of public behavior a distinctively and thoroughly Catholic legitimacy.

Everything that Catholic Christians and their church advocate from a social point of view is undergirded by the church's reading of the New Testament. From the Gospels and Paul, Catholics extract a nucleus of primordial moral imperatives in which subsidiarity, solidarity, and the rest are implicit but not fully differentiated. These prior imperatives call for such things as the concretely realized equality of all men and women, freedom as a universally exercised human endowment, and the protection of every woman's (or man's) claim to the possession of productive property. But, arguably, the most important of these underlying imperatives is what one might call the doctrine of the universally regenerative power of grace. In the Catholic understanding of the New Testament, grace is willed by God for the benefit of all mankind, not exclusively for the restricted group of the elect. The conviction that all humans were created to enjoy an actively participative place in the order of grace drives the church's incessant pursuit of a social order whose equality and freedom are warmed to life by love.

E. Peter Royal
Marlin, Texas

Land war

To the editors:

Although Yossi Klein Halevi is correct that the Palestinians and the Lebanese reveal a peculiar and (certainly in the case of the Palestinians) potentially self-defeating lack of prudence in rioting and threatening violence in the face of Israeli concessions ("End of the Affair," June 5), they still do not have a lot to be grateful about. Israel inflicted thousands of casualties and untold millions of dollars of damage in the course of an 18-year occupation in Lebanon; and the Palestinians remain hemmed in by Israeli forces, and even more impoverished than before, seven years after the beginning of the Oslo peace process. These lamentable facts are not entirely Israel's fault, but try explaining that to the primary victims.

Ralph Seliger
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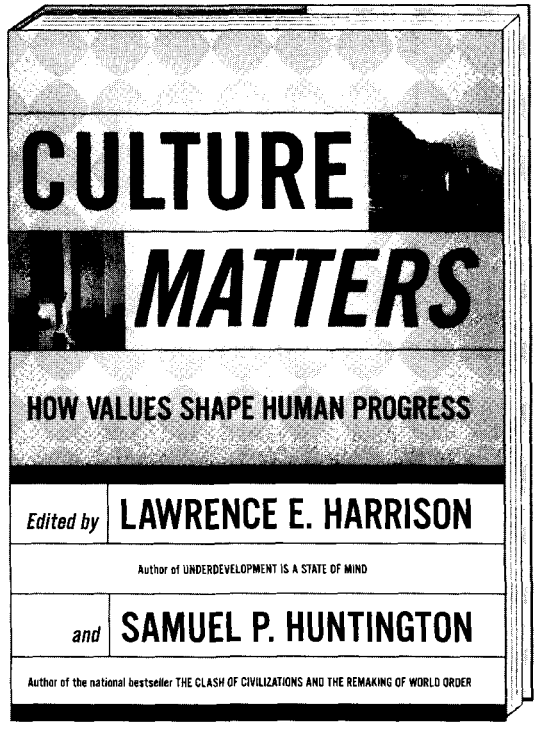
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FROM WASHINGTON

Witch Hint

On June 22, Independent Counsel Robert Ray closed his investigation of Hillary Clinton's role in the 1993 firings of seven employees of the White House travel office. The evidence, Ray explained in a press release, "was insufficient to prove to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt that any of Mrs. Clinton's statements and testimony regarding her involvement in the travel office firings were knowingly false." Nevertheless, he added, "substantial evidence" contradicted Clinton's testimony. This parting shot was an apt non-ending to a scandal that has showcased one of Washington's low arts: how to rub out your victims without leaving fingerprints, by dropping hints that they need to be punished. That, Ray insinuates, is what Hillary Clinton did to the travel office workers. It's also what Ray, through his parting insinuation, is doing to Clinton.

The basic allegation in the travel office affair is that the Clintons unjustly fired the seven employees in order to replace them with cronies. The relevant question today is whether Hillary Clinton's behavior in that episode and in the consequent investigation illustrates a pattern of deception and abuse of power that renders her unfit for the Senate. She has testified that she "had no decision-making role with regard to the removal of the travel office employees." Ray, however, concludes that "there was substantial evidence that she had a 'role' in the decision to fire the travel office employees."

What exactly was Clinton's role? According to Ray, "She had discussions with Deputy White House Counsel Vince Foster, Chief of Staff Mack McLarty, and longtime friend and adviser Harry Thomason, and one direct telephone conversation with David Watkins (whose responsibilities included oversight and management of the travel office) in which she expressed her 'concerns' regarding the travel office. These individuals discussed her concerns among themselves, which produced a momentum to take immediate action. Thus, Mrs. Clinton's concerns ultimately influenced Watkins's decision to fire the travel office employees."

By this standard, anyone whose outspoken concerns generate momentum culminating in action has played a decision-making role in that action. Let's apply that standard to its author. Is Ray playing a role in the campaign against Clinton? As a prosecutor, his job was to put up or shut up. He did neither. Rather than propose a legal indictment that could be tested in court, he delivered a damning, unfalsifiable characterization of Clinton's conduct. That characterization is ostensibly based on his full report, which by law is supposed to be sealed for months. As a result, Clinton can't effectively rebut Ray, and he can't be accused of sabotaging her campaign. All he did was state his concerns.

Ray's statement certainly generated momentum. Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, and Dan Rather quoted his finding of "substantial evidence" against Clinton. The campaign manager for Representative Rick Lazio, Clinton's opponent in the New York Senate race, linked Ray's report to the Clintons' "long history of abusing federal authority ... to attack their political opponents." The papers also weighed in. "Travelgate inquiry suggests signs of lies by first lady," declared the *Los Angeles Times*. "Cleared, with questions; Ray cites 'substantial evidence' first lady had firings role," agreed *The Washington Post*. The coverage in New York was more damning: "Hil's hit on travelgate role," shouted the *Daily News*; "good liar—prober believes Hill hid the truth on travelgate," crowed the *New York Post*.

It can't be long before these headlines show up in campaign ads. So suppose this momentum leads to action by the voters against Clinton in November. Is Ray responsible? Not according to him. On June 25, he went on "Meet the Press" to show off his clean hands. "When I make a judgment that a matter should be closed ... that should be shared with the public. And that's what we did, and nothing more," Ray insisted. "This matter then returns appropriately to the people and to the political process," he explained. "I'm not going to comment about ... how the public and how newspapers evaluate what it is that we have said." Meanwhile, just in case the public and the press hadn't gotten the message, Ray shared a further insight. It was "clear from our evaluation," he averred, that the "momentum" leading to the travel office firings "emanated from the first lady."

The independent counsel's pretense of restraint is laughable. It's obvious he thinks Clinton engineered the firings. The *New York Post* has reported as much: "Sources say Ray believes Clinton lied ... but that she fudged her Travelgate testimony enough to make it too hard to get a conviction." When asked about this report, Ray replied, "I don't have beliefs with regard to that in the proper functioning of my role as a prosecutor.... It doesn't matter what I believe. It matters what I can prove." Then why does Ray keep talking about what he can't prove?

Ray seems haunted by the fate of his predecessor, Kenneth Starr. Since leaving office, Starr has often said that his principal mistake in the Monica Lewinsky case was maintaining a decorous silence while his adversaries misrepresented him and his investigation. Now he wishes he had spent more time explaining his motives and decisions to the public. Ray has absorbed that lesson with a vengeance: File your report, issue a press release, and go on television to defend it. But the two prosecutors are in different positions. If you're under attack for bringing charges, the Starr strategy might make sense. But if your adversaries are ignoring you because you don't have a legal case, what's the point? Just pronounce the evidence insufficient, close the investigation, and shut up. Dropping hints about who did what to whom—particularly when the basis for such conclusions is sealed—can serve no judicial purpose. It can only serve a political purpose.

Which is exactly what Hillary Clinton's enemies have in mind. They want Ray to embarrass her. The same day Ray issued his statement, *New York Times* columnist William Safire conceded that Clinton had never instructed Watkins to fire the travel office staff. "Of course not; she was not a government official, and had no power to direct, order, or command. But he got her message, and the employees got the gate," Safire theorized. "Ever since, Hillary Clinton has been artfully (non-prosecutably) misleading us about her mean-spirited power abuse. Ray may show us how."

Yes, Ray may show us how—by stooping to the tactics he set out to expose. If Clinton's words and deeds aren't prosecutable, so what? The independent counsel can punish her anyway. He doesn't have to spell it out or tell voters what to do. They'll get his message, and Clinton will get the gate. All the while, Ray can couch his remarks in terms of prosecutorial evaluation, artfully misleading us about his power abuse. It's an outrage, really. One wonders whether something ought to be done about it.

William Saletan

William Saletan is a senior writer at *Slate.com*.

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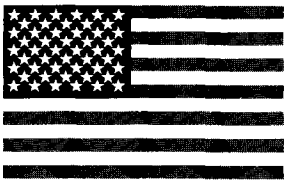
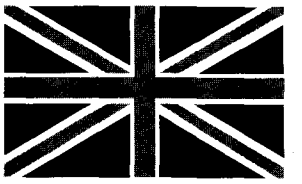


Findings of the British Police Foundation Concerning Reform of Marijuana Laws[1]



"Our conclusion is that the present law on cannabis produces more harm than it prevents. It is very expensive of the time and resources of the criminal justice system and especially of the police. It inevitably bears more heavily on young people in the streets of inner cities, who are also more likely to be from minority ethnic communities, and as such is inimical to police-community relations. It criminalizes large numbers of otherwise law-abiding, mainly young, people to the detriment of their futures. It has become a proxy for the control of public order; and it inhibits accurate education about the relative risks of different drugs including the risks of cannabis itself. Weighing these costs against the harms of cannabis, we are convinced that a better balance is needed and would be achieved if our recommendations were implemented.

Under our proposals, the normal sanctions for offenses of cannabis possession and cultivation for personal use would be out-of-court disposals, including informal warnings, statutory cautions or a fixed fine on the model of the Scottish fiscal fine. Prosecution would be the exception, and only then would a conviction result in a criminal record. We understand that if the sanctions for cannabis possession and cultivation, both in the law and its enforcement, were to be substantially reduced there would be a risk that more people would use it. But the international evidence does not suggest that this is inevitable or even likely. Given the current widespread availability and use of cannabis, we judge that more would be gained in terms of credibility, respect for the law and the police, and accurate education messages than would be lost in potential damage to public and individual health by the control regime which we recommend. We also believe that our proposed regime would promote the targeting of enforcement resources on those drugs and activities which cause the greatest harm in line with the objectives of the national strategy. It would also accord with public perceptions of where policing priorities should lie."

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[1]"Drugs and the Law: Report of the Independent Inquiry into the Misuse of Drugs Act of 1971." The Police Foundation, Chairman: Viscountess Runciman DBE, April 4, 2000. The Police Foundation, based in London England, is a non-profit organization that promotes research, debate and publication to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in the UK.

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The Big Test

THE FIRST MAP of the human genome, announced June 26, describes something marvelous beyond the power of words to convey: an invisibly small bundle of 3.2 billion chemical points containing a blueprint for a self-aware, living human being. Future historians may judge the genome's unlocking to be the most significant event since the invention of the internal combustion engine or even the wheel. Eventually researchers will come to understand how genes make people—and, at the current speed of technological advance, "eventually" may mean next year.

In the short term, this new understanding is not only awe-inspiring, it is good: illnesses that are entirely or partly hereditary will be reduced or even eliminated; life expectancy may be significantly increased, as scientists learn to switch off the parts of our chromosomes that seem to dictate cellular senescence. But it won't be long before we confront the dangers of our new knowledge as well. Employers and insurers will get better at predicting who will be susceptible to disease, enabling them to shun people genetically predisposed to certain types of illness. Detailed DNA readouts may encourage parents to abort fetuses likely to grow up sickly or short or mentally average. Reliable gene-screening tests already exist for a few human characteristics. What will happen when they exist for hundreds, perhaps down to test-taking aptitude or proclivity for shyness?

And "eventually"—again, perhaps meaning within decades or sooner—researchers may learn to fashion genes from scratch. Today not even the most inspired bioengineer has an inkling of how to make a new gene; all she can do is tag and rearrange bits of DNA that occur naturally. But someday researchers will likely determine how to custom-design genetic material. New genes might be created to confer upon human beings an unknown variety of desirable traits—immunity to disease, greater tolerance of heat or cold, failure-free hearts, abhorrence of violence. And, of course, if people can design humans with desirable traits, they can design them with undesirable ones as well. The horrors are beyond our capacity to imagine.

Either way, the differences between us and the people who follow us are likely to be far greater, genetically speaking, than those between any two human beings alive today. Subsequent generations, perhaps as soon as our grandchildren's, may be known not as *Homo sapiens* but as *Homo geneticus* or *Homo Glaxo Wellcomus*. For good or ill, people are about to take over the role of God and nature in determining the course of evolution.

And politically we're not remotely prepared. It's become fashionable in recent years to delight in the triumph of science over politics, to say that technology is rendering government irrelevant and thus expanding the frontiers of human freedom. Last week's enormity lays bare how deceptive and perilous such talk is. That the genome map exists is a scientific accomplishment. Whether it serves or terrorizes humanity depends on political accomplishments. And yet already our politics are falling behind. So far, the United States does not even have a comprehensive system for regulating the genetic modification of crops, a relatively unthreatening technology that has already been in widespread use for years. We have scarcely begun to think through the regulation of human genetic therapy and genetic screening, let alone prepare for human genetic alteration or human reproductive cloning—both of which could blindside society by arriving much sooner than expected.

Here's a start: We need—and fast—a constitutional amendment to protect medical privacy, including genetic privacy. It's true that constitutional amendments are rarely a first choice in solving problems. But, in biogenetics, so much is happening so fast and so much is at stake that nothing short of an explicit constitutional remedy will do.

Next we need to fashion an international consensus that fundamental human-genome information cannot be patented or copyrighted. Patenting microbes and crop plants is one thing; patenting humanity is another. For the genome announcement, President Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair set aside the issue of whether Celera Genomics owns what it has mapped. This is a dangerous ambiguity, and it must be resolved. It's true that people benefit from the profit incentive in medical research. But there will be plenty of ways for biomedical firms to make money in the new genetic world; allowing them to assert ownership over the common heritage of humanity should not be one of them.

These steps must be merely the beginning of a massive effort to develop institutions and laws to ensure that morality structures human genomics rather than the other way around. With last week's announcement, American science recorded one of the singular achievements of human history. Now American politics must do its share. ■

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NOTEBOOK

THE AFTER-PARTY: Defenders of big money in American politics usually keep their heads down. But last week they discarded their shyness long enough to throw themselves a victory party at the Cato Institute. The occasion was the official swearing-in of Bradley Smith, a law professor at Capital University in Ohio plucked from obscurity to sit on the Federal Election Commission for one, and only one, reason: He supports repealing the very election laws the FEC is supposed to enforce. Smith insists, of course, that his belief that campaign finance laws violate free speech won't interfere with his new job: "Everybody in politics is sometimes asked to enforce laws they don't agree with," he said. But invitees to the Cato shindig—including such passionate free-speech advocates as the National Automobile Dealers Association and the National Right to Life Committee—didn't seem overly worried. The event was, in the words of one Cato official, a deliberate "slap in the face to [Smith's] detractors." Also on hand to savor the slapping were Senator Mitch McConnell, the GOP's chief money guzzler, and Judge James Buckley, the plaintiff in the infamous 1976 *Buckley* v. *Valeo* case that established the legal equivalence of free campaign spending and free speech. All in all, the evening's message wasn't subtle: the FEC, already famously ineffectual, just gained a guy who's a likely "no" vote on enforcing almost anything. For his part, Smith, who hasn't quite mastered that spinning-the-press thing yet, told THE NEW REPUBLIC, with admirable forthrightness, "My central issue is, we've got to let people participate in politics. And not just the little guy. It's the big guy, too."

WE DON'T CARE WHAT ANYBODY SAYS, WE'LL RUN THESE STUPEFYING ARTICLES EVERY DAY UNTIL WE GET THE PULITZER:

In the Halls of Congress, Taking the Helm in the Troubled Waters of Black and White

WASHINGTON, June 29 — On the surface, they share so much. He's passionate about the Confederate flag, and so is she. She wears her heart on her sleeve and a chip on her shoulder, and so does he. If a love of pork rinds could heal America, together they could heal the country.

A brother, a sister. Yet a gulf separates Jesse Helms and Maxine Waters. It is the great American gulf of race. The gulf war, even. But they never speak of this gulf. In fact, they never speak at all. How could they?

HOW RACE IS LIVED IN AMERICA

Ninety-first article of a series.

The summer sun drenches Washington, as is the summer sun's wont, and Jesse Helms ambles up the marble steps, the white marble steps, of the Capitol. Even the most casual observer will notice that he moves with great difficulty. In part, this is because he is a 76-year-old man in a motorized cart. But the question of color is never far from the crisis in the senator's gait. After all, he is talking about—for decades he has had the pluck to talk about—the great American crucible of race. He has been around too long, and seen too much, and expressed too much prejudice, to think that the problems of race will easily fade into the history books: "To those who ask us, the sons of the South, to take down our Confederate flag, I say: Go suck down a watermelon!" The pathos in his drawl is unmistakable.

On his daily journey to the Capitol, a long, painful journey, Helms will sometimes cast his eyes on a woman whom he has never met. He has seen her face on television—"flapping her ignorant lips," as he describes it, in his soulful way. But that is not ignorance on her lips. It is anger, and bad lipstick. Her bad lipstick is not an abstraction, at least not to her. And her anger is the bane and the birthright of all Americans who are like her. And, in a way, Helms is like her, even if his skin has a light, rotting hue.

What unites them, what unites so many citizens across the color lines and the rope lines of a quilted and tormented America, is a common belief. Like Helms, Waters has no illusions about race. "The CIA, the federal government, the National Hockey League," she says, thoughtfully staring at the ceiling of her office and observing with a quiet pain that it, too, is white, "have deliberately set out to introduce AIDS, crack, guns, and Eminem into the ghetto. It is a holocaust."

Is it really a holocaust? More importantly, does it matter if it is really a holocaust, if it has the appearance of a holocaust? But does it have the appearance of a holocaust, and who is judging the appearing? And in the privacy of a humble but unhumbled diner on North Capitol

Continued on Pages A16-D27

THEY'RE ALMOST AS GOOD AS JIMMY CARTER: Ever since Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe began terrorizing his political opponents in the run-up to last week's parliamentary elections, American foreign policy has followed a simple principle: Let South Africa take the lead. There's just one problem: President Thabo Mbeki's government has shown itself deeply uninterested in the human rights of the people directly to its north. And never

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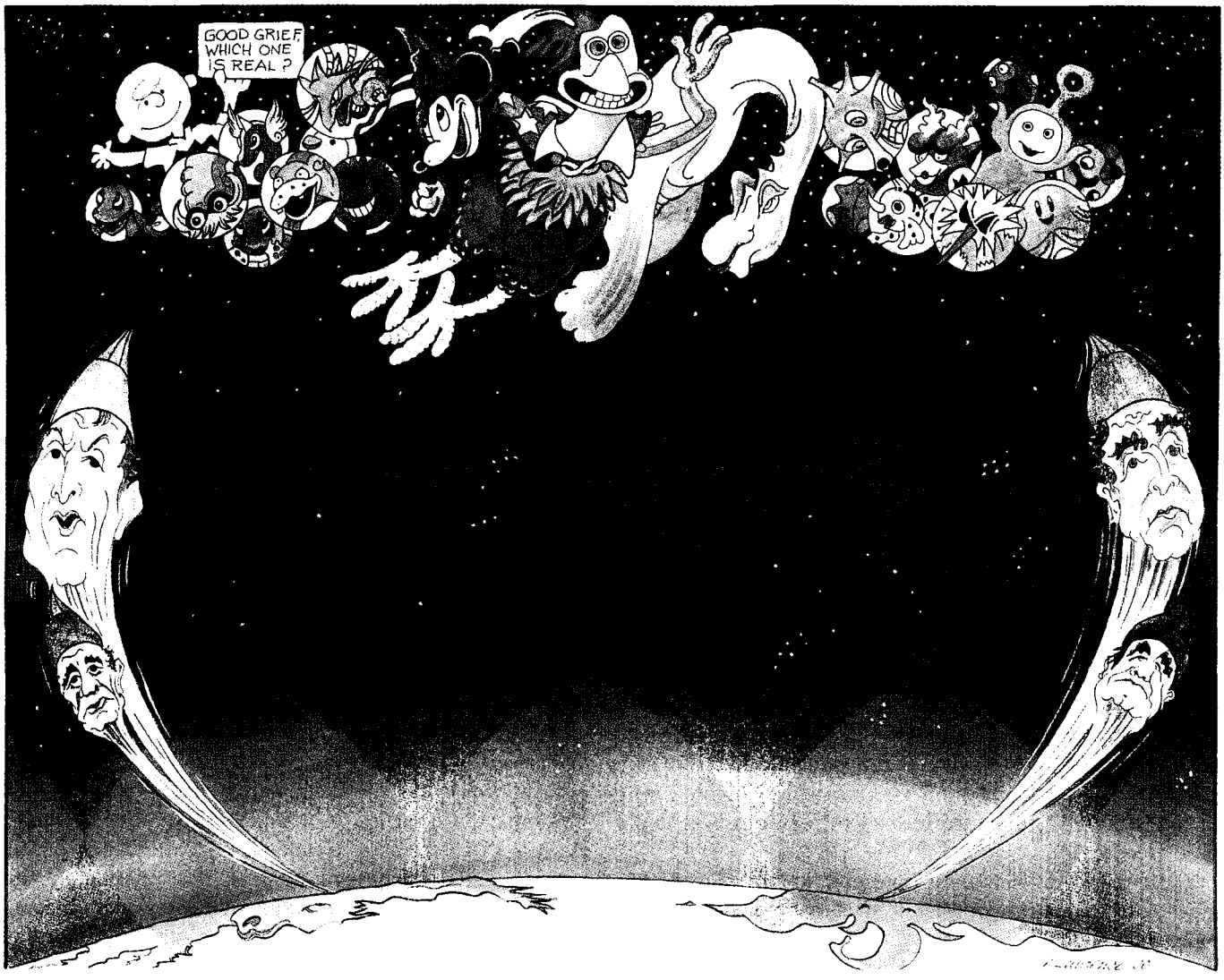
more so than last week, when the Zimbabwean opposition, having endured massive intimidation by supporters of Mugabe's ruling ZANU-PF, nonetheless miraculously captured almost half the elected seats in parliament. So how did the South African government respond? "Once again, well done ZANU-PF, well done President Robert Mugabe," cheered an official statement from Mbeki's African National Congress. "ZANU-PF's victory is, indeed, a milestone in the political growth of Zimbabwe." Maybe we should put them in charge of democratizing Serbia, too.

PRIOR RESTRAINT: There's a new partner in the Middle East peace process—Hezbollah. Or at least that's what Kofi Annan seems to think. During his trip to the region last week, the U.N. secretary-general paid a visit to Lebanese Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Iranian-funded, Syrian-coordinated guerrilla group, and praised Hezbollah for its "restraint, responsibility, and discipline" in the aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon on May 24. "When parties are committed to peace," said a U.N. official, explaining Annan's trip, "the U.N. deals with them." Fair enough, but when you think "commitment to peace," Hezbollah doesn't exactly leap to mind. Indeed, while the group hasn't fired any rockets across the Israel-Lebanon border since Israel's withdrawal, a good number of stones and firebombs have been hurled from Hezbollah-controlled territory. And then there was Nasrallah's speech, broadcast in Gaza, after the pullout but before Annan's trip, exhorting Palestinians to "fight the Zionists with stones, daggers, knives, and bombs, expel them from the land, and make them return to whence they came...." What was that the secretary-general was saying about "restraint, responsibility, and discipline"?

JOE MCCARTHY, WE HARDLY KNEW YE: The Missouri Republican Party has a new platform with a new "promise"—to "reverse 40 years of socialism." Socialists Ford, Reagan, and Bush, not to mention Gingrich, should be quaking in their boots. If that was socialism, we'd hate to see capitalism. ■

VINT'S WEEK



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Nader learns to triangulate.

Slick Ralphie

By JONATHAN CHAIT

ACCORDING TO RALPH NADER, President Clinton has betrayed the rank and file of the Democratic Party. "They're no longer the party of the working family," he told *The American Prospect*. Organized labor, he told the Teamsters, is now "taken for granted" by the Democrats. "Right now," he declared in another interview, "it's the corporations pulling the Democrats into [their] lap."

Nader may be nutty about lots of things, but in this he's partly right. Clinton—sometimes out of political pragmatism, sometimes out of genuine belief—has milked the Democratic Party base for votes while forsaking its issues. What Nader doesn't mention is that he plans to do basically the same thing to the Green Party.

Nader's plan is clear. He knows third parties cannot survive in a "winner take all" system. Historically, the best they can do is force one (or both) of the major parties to take up their issues. After the Perot scare of 1992, both parties jumped on the deficit-reduction bandwagon. Similarly, if Nader can do well enough in the fall—say, five percent—the Democrats will have to adopt at least part of his agenda.

The problem for the Greens is that the agenda Nader wants the Democratic Party to appropriate is not theirs. Just as probable Reform Party nominee Pat Buchanan has been downplaying political reform while pushing social views anathema to many in his new party, Nader has put the Green Party apparatus in the service of his own obsessions. Rather than make the Greens' issues his, Nader has made his issues theirs.

Since Nader and the Green Party both sit well to the left of the Democrats, you might think they shared the same goals. They don't. Nader is just to the left of Senator Tom Harkin. The Greens are just to the right of the bearded guy with the nose ring passing out leaflets at your local college campus. Nader realizes that he can't get his five percent campaigning on the radical fringe. So instead he's triangulating—running somewhere to the left of the Democrats but to the right of the Greens. (Sound familiar?)

Second, and even more important, Nader is emphasizing a set of issues—mainly trade and corporate regulation—with which the Greens are only peripherally concerned. That means that if his campaign succeeds, the issues he forces onto the national agenda will be his, not the Greens'. The Green Party activists who supported him will get nothing out of the deal and will return instead to powerlessness and obsolescence.

The Greens, in their tofu-chomping, guitar-strumming naïveté, seem unaware of Nader's machinations. But there's more than enough evidence of their presidential nominee's lack of interest in his party's agenda. Take a radio interview this month in which a caller asked Nader to assess some Green platform planks, such as the abolition of the U.S. Senate. "Well, that's news to me," he replied. "I don't know how you know what the Green platform's going to be. It hasn't even been completed yet." When the caller insisted he had read the platform at *www.greenparty.org*, Nader questioned the authenticity of the site. "I'm certain that they don't call for the abolition of the U.S. Senate," he maintained.

Actually, the Green Party does call for the abolition of the Senate—and that's one of its more moderate notions. From there the party's platform descends into quasi-socialism and inscrutable left-wing jargon. The Greens are opposed to "a hierarchical, exploitative, and alienated social system that systematically produces human oppression and ecological destruction." They propose to nationalize the largest 500 American corporations and to confiscate all income that exceeds ten times the minimum wage. (The latter point is not quite as draconian as it sounds, since the Greens also favor a $12.50 minimum wage.) They further endorse a 75 percent cut in defense spending, plus the abolition of the CIA, the NSA, and "all aggressive military alliances," such as NATO.

Nader's lack of familiarity with his party's platform is all the more shameless since a great deal of deliberation has obviously gone into the document. The Greens advocate "clemency for Leonard Peltier," a "new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal," and "freedom for Lori Berenson," meting out their justice in careful gradations. You can picture the hours of fierce debate that led the Greens to propose "a critical reappraisal of the use of animals in quasi-educational institutions such as zoos and aquariums" rather than an immediate ban. The Greens don't call for criminalizing meat, but they would severely curtail the conditions under which it could be produced and insist that "the benefits of vegetarianism ... be taught in all public health-education programs."

OF COURSE, IT'S easy to understand why Nader wouldn't want to run on a platform of syndicalism and mandatory indoctrination in vegetarianism. But lately he has treated even the broader, more mainstream themes of his party with something bordering on disdain. After his nominating convention, Nader listed the three major elements of his candidacy, and environmentalism—the principle on which the Green Party was founded—did not make the list. And, when it comes to specific environmental policy, Nader has waffled. On the day of his nomination, Tim Russert of "Meet the Press" asked Nader about his long-standing support for a gasoline-tax increase. But Nader quickly poohpoohed the idea, switching the topic to the oil monopolies running up the cost of gasoline. When Russert pressed him on the tax, Nader argued defensively, and unconvincingly, that "any gasoline tax that is established ... would end up with gasoline prices lower than they are now."

Aiming for lower gas prices may be politically popular, but it is anathema even to moderate environmentalists, let alone the Greens, whose platform calls for phasing out the use of fossil fuels altogether. Sure, nobody wants oil companies to enjoy monopolistic profits, but the important thing, if you believe in Green ideology, is to *raise* the cost of

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gasoline so that people will use less of it. It's almost unimaginably perverse that the Green Party candidate favors cheaper gas.

You would think this kind of pandering would set off a revolt within the Green Party. But, having already won its nomination, Nader can now afford to ignore its issues in his quest to reach the mid-single digits. After all, the Greens have nowhere else to go. Bill Clinton couldn't have done it better himself. ■

Gore's Janet Reno problem.

Friends Like These

By Bruce Gottlieb

To hear their critics tell it, Janet Reno has Al Gore's back. In late November 1996—soon after questions first arose about President Clinton and Vice President Gore's fund-raising for that year's campaign—the attorney general declined to appoint an independent counsel. In December 1997, FBI Director Louis Freeh called for her to appoint an independent counsel, and she rebuffed him. In July 1998, her chief campaign finance prosecutor at the time, Charles LaBella, made the request again, and again Reno refused. Then, last week, news leaked that yet another Justice Department prosecutor, Robert Conrad, had recommended a special prosecutor (the independent counsel statute recently expired) to investigate Gore. It was widely assumed that this suggestion, too, would fall on deaf ears. After all, as the *New York Post* opined shortly after Conrad's recommendation leaked, "To date, Gore has been protected by Attorney General Janet Reno." Or, as *The Wall Street Journal* put it a few weeks back, the attorney general has been Gore's "guardian angel."

Some guardian angel. If Reno is trying to protect the vice president, she's doing a terrible job of it. Indeed, Reno has managed to turn Gore into the first presidential candidate on Earth to suffer for the *lack* of an independent counsel. If Clinton proved that appointing an independent prosecutor can nearly destroy a politician, Gore may prove that not appointing one can be just as bad—and sometimes even worse.

Primarily at issue is whether Gore broke campaign finance laws in the 1996 election by phoning a series of wealthy Democratic donors from his White House office and attending a fund-raiser at a Buddhist temple in Los Angeles. Also in question is whether he misled prosecutors about the two incidents. On the surface, these charges aren't exactly the makings of a great scandal. For one thing, everyone agrees that had Gore made the same fund-raising calls from somewhere other than his government office, there would be no problem. His use of a government telephone—and the fact that this may violate an obscure, seldom-enforced 120-year-old campaign finance statute—suggests that he had poor legal advice, not that he was trying to subvert the spirit of the campaign finance law. (At least, he was not trying any harder than most candidates in the freewheeling 1996 elections.) As for the Buddhist temple fund-raiser, it's clear that someone was using nuns and monks who'd taken vows of poverty as "straw donors" to funnel money to the Democrats, but no one has produced hard evidence that Gore was a party to this deception.

Indeed, even those calling on Reno to appoint an independent counsel don't necessarily think that Gore's activities constitute criminal wrongdoing. LaBella, for instance, told "Meet the Press" earlier this year that he never expected an independent prosecutor to find enough evidence to warrant criminal charges. He supported an independent counsel, he said, simply to assure the public that the investigation was fair. And Freeh's memo to Reno recommending an independent counsel also stopped short of accusing Gore of specific criminal wrongdoing. His strongest charge was that Justice Department investigators weren't being aggressive enough. Finally, while no one knows for certain why Conrad believes Reno should appoint a special prosecutor—since Conrad won't make his thoughts public—Justice Department officials say it's because he suspected Gore misled him during an interview two months ago. A quick-thinking Gore campaign immediately released the transcript of the questioning, which contained essentially no new information.

Which is precisely why Gore would have been better off had Reno just gone ahead and appointed an independent counsel to investigate him years ago. After all, while post-Lewinsky conventional wisdom holds that an independent counsel invariably ruins the politician he investigates, the reality is much less stark. To be sure, in the Monica Lewinsky investigation, as well as the investigations of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros and Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, special prosecutors did abuse their power. But such cases are not the whole story. Independent counsels often mitigate the political effect of a baseless or partially true charge—and, unlike internal investigations, they have the credibility to genuinely clear people of wrongdoing.

Consider Hillary Clinton. A year ago, most people assumed that the first lady, not Gore, would be the one whose campaign was dogged by scandal. But last week, on the same day that newspapers reported Conrad's recommendation to Reno, Robert Ray, Kenneth Starr's successor, filed his Travelgate report—in which he declined to bring charges against Clinton. Ray pointedly refused to confirm the first lady's account of events and more or less accused her of misleading prosecutors. His insinuations will surely be used against Clinton—but they carry far less weight than the charge that a cover-up kept her actions from being fully investigated. When asked about the travel office firings, Clinton can always

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reply that she was thoroughly investigated and not charged.

Then there are the cases of Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, Labor Secretary Alexis Herman, and White House aide Eli Segal, three other Clintonites who came under the watchful eye of independent counsels. Herman and Babbitt were accused of more serious abuses than Gore: Babbitt, of denying an Indian casino a permit in return for campaign contributions from rival tribes; Herman, of accepting kickbacks from a Cameroonian businessman; and Segal, of fundraising for a private group while heading AmeriCorps. All three were eventually cleared of wrongdoing: Babbitt's investigation took 19 months, Herman's, 23 months; and Segal's, only five. If Reno had appointed an independent counsel when the allegations against Gore first broke, even if the investigation had lasted as long as Herman's, it would be over by now. Indeed, Babbitt and Herman both retained their Cabinet seats during and after the investigation; Segal left for the private sector of his own accord. Today, all three are scandal-free.

Gore, on the other hand, is knee-deep in scandal. And it's no longer just the ticky-tacky allegations about his fundraising. Those have metastasized into even bigger—and potentially more serious—questions about why Reno has refused to appoint an independent counsel to investigate them. It's a Justice Department scandal that has nothing to do with Gore—no one, not even his most strident critics, has tried to implicate him in the cover-up—yet he's the one who'll suffer the fallout. If this is political protection, what's political sabotage? ■

Window Rock Dispatch

Boyz on the Rez

By VINCE BEISER

RANDY, A STOCKY, dark-skinned 28-year-old, sits on a folding chair in the dirt yard outside his battered one-story house. Dressed in baggy jeans and a black hooded sweatshirt, he recounts how his gang, the Insane Cobra Nation, took over the run-down housing projects he's lived in since he was nine. "At first it was just about beating people up for money," Randy says. "Then it built up to where people started shooting at us, and us at them." Not long ago, he boasts, pointing down the road to a spot just past an abandoned house slathered with gang tags, his Cobras stabbed a former comrade-in-arms 13 times for joining the rival West Siders. "I grew up in a fucked-up household," Randy says by way of explaining how he joined his gang. "My dad was an alcoholic.... I grew up poor.... The only people who would help me out were my bros, the Cobras. They became my family."

Randy's trajectory—from childhood poverty to adult gang violence—is so familiar that it's practically become a cliché of inner-city life. But Randy's story has a twist: From where he's sitting in his front yard, there's no major city for hundreds of miles. Despite his homeboy outfit and affect, the "streets" his gang claims are mostly dirt roads.

Randy Wauneka is a full-blooded Navajo Indian, and the Insane Cobra Nation's turf is on the Navajos' Southwestern reservation, 25,000 square miles of dry scrubland and soaring red-rock spires. Out in the reservation's high-desert hinterland, tribal elders still herd sheep and sleep in traditional hogans. But in the reservation's capital, Window Rock, a cheerless sprawl of low stucco houses and trailer homes, tags from the Navajo Nation's 50 gangs mark every bridge and street sign.

And it's not just Window Rock: urban-style gangs have been springing up on Indian reservations across the country. Six years ago, according to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), there were 181 known Indian gangs. Today, the BIA estimates, there are some 520, with a total of more than 6,000 members—from the Bitches for Life among South Dakota's Rosebud tribe to the Red Pride Bloods on Arizona's Tohono O'Odham reservation.

The effect of gangs on Indian communities has been profound. While some gangs are relatively harmless—consisting of packs of alienated Indian youths doing nothing more serious than spray-painting walls—others aren't so benign. In recent years, Window Rock's murder rate has surged past Chicago's and Los Angeles's; at one point, the homicide rate on Montana's Fort Peck reservation was more than double the rate in New Orleans. Indeed, while the nationwide homicide rate has fallen steadily in the last decade—dropping 37 percent between 1992 and 1998, the most recent year for which complete statistics are available—reported murders on Indian reservations shot up by 50 percent between 1992 and 1999. A recent federal study found that American Indians are now twice as likely to be victims of violent crime as members of any other ethnic or racial group. Says Gordon Toadlena, supervisor of the Navajo police department's Window Rock criminal-investigations unit, "The murders went up when we started having gang problems."

LONG PLAGUED BY poverty, alcohol abuse, family dysfunction, and the anger of the marginalized, Indian reservations are fertile ground for criminal gangs. The demographics don't help either: the median age of American Indians is 24, as opposed to 33 for other Americans. On many reservations, half the population is under 18.

That Indian gangs copy the culture of their urban counterparts is little wonder. After all, mainstream American society is seeping onto reservations like never before. Thanks to MTV, CDs, and the Internet, some young Indians know more about Snoop Dogg's history than about the history of their people. "I don't know what Navajo culture really is," says a rail-thin young Navajo who calls himself Xpres and performs with the Window Rock rap group Tribal Live, "so I

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can't say I take part in it."

And it's not just technology that's bringing gang culture to reservations; young Indians are bringing it themselves. Increasing numbers of Native Americans are spending time in big cities, where many get involved in gang life and bring it back when they return home. The Cobras, for instance, were started by a Navajo who moved to Chicago, joined a gang, and then returned to Window Rock. Many Indians also join gangs in state and federal prisons, which currently house more than 12,000 Indians—a number that has doubled since 1990.

BUT, WHILE INDIAN gangs copy the styles of their urban counterparts, they may surpass them when it comes to the senselessness of their violence. On reservations, commercial crimes—like drug deals, robberies, and carjackings—aren't a major source of intergang violence. Instead, it consists mostly of gang members attacking each other, either to gain prestige or out of simple malice. "They're not into gangs for the money," says William Mitchell Jr., a BIA police officer who until recently patrolled several reservations near Albuquerque, New Mexico. "It's more about the glamour and trying to be the tough guy." Says Joe Lodge, a prosecutor with the U.S. attorney's office in Phoenix, "The violence is real turf-oriented. It's 'You're in our area wearing the wrong color or flashing the wrong signs, so we're gonna get you, because that's what we see on TV.' "

The turf wars can be particularly brutal. In 1996, when the Cobras took on a rival gang called the Dragons, murders on the Navajo reservation hit a record 67. "There were drive-bys every weekend," recalls Sergeant Wallace Billie, a thickset Navajo police officer. "We had lots of bodies popping up." Even the little Salt River Pima-Maricopa reservation near Phoenix saw dozens of drive-by shootings, which culminated in 1997 when five members of its East Side Crips Rolling Thirties gang were sent to prison on charges ranging from murder to witness intimidation.

Yet, for all this urban-style mayhem, reservation police forces remain staffed and equipped at sub-Podunk levels: While the average small town has 2.9 cops per 1,000 residents, the average reservation has only 1.3. Making matters worse, tribal police often have to cover huge swatches of territory, with no backup officers for miles. Just last December, a police officer arriving alone at the scene of a reported break-in on Arizona's White River Apache reservation was shot to death; he was the only officer on duty at that time on the entire reservation. And, even when the cops do arrest people, dilapidated jails barely hold them. Half a dozen prisoners escaped from the Window Rock Tribal Jail one recent year before police discovered that the back door could be opened with a piece of wire.

In response, many reservations have shifted their strained resources to the fight against youth crime; as of 1998, 15 tribes had created gang task forces. And this year the Navajo Nation began work on the first youth correctional facility on an Indian reservation. What's more, the federal government—responsible for most of the public security in what is called "Indian country"—has belatedly boosted law enforcement funding in the last two years, partly in response to the gang problem. This year, the Clinton administration has asked Congress for an extra $103 million for Indian law enforcement. Those infusions have swelled the BIA's law enforcement budget by more than $20 million in each of the last two years.

But it's not nearly enough. "When you spread that out across the whole country, it doesn't go a long way," says Mike McCoy, BIA district commander for the New Mexico area. "It means an extra car here, some extra body armor there."

Things have calmed down a bit on the Navajo reservation in recent months, since an FBI-led crackdown landed 14 top Cobras in prison. Last year's murder rate was the lowest in five years. But no one thinks the gangs are gone for good. Indeed, on the last day of 1999, four Cobras broke into a house and stole a collection of sniper rifles and a .45 pistol. With 300 Cobras still active, not to mention rivals like the Killer Park Crips and West Siders, it's only a matter of time before trouble flares up again. "We don't have the capacity to either suppress or rehabilitate these guys," says Stewart Calnimptewa, a Navajo former cop who now runs a security firm specializing in gang trouble. "We'll see a surge in crime again. The boys are getting restless."

Randy Wauneka agrees. "Once in a gang, you're down for life," he says. "I couldn't just say, 'I want out.' All the respect I've got now, I'd be throwing it down the shithole. And then my old homies would start punkin' me. I was born a Navajo and I'll always be a Navajo. But I'll be a gang member, too, till the day I die." ■

And the verdict is: hubris.

Pride and Prejudice

By JEFFREY ROSEN

IN THE FINAL days of a remarkable term, the Rehnquist Court reaffirmed three of the most controversial decisions of the Warren era. The justices held that the *Miranda* warnings are constitutionally required, struck down student-led prayer at a high school football game, and invalidated state bans on partial-birth abortion. It may seem ironic that the Republican justices, who were appointed to overturn the pillars of Warrenism, are accepting and extending them. But it is less ironic than it seems—because the defining characteristic of this Court, like that one, is hubris. Both combine haughty declarations of judicial supremacy with contempt for the competing views of the political branches. The Rehnquist Court differs from the Warren Court only in that it prefers to follow conventional opinion rather than challenge it. Today, unlike the 1960s and '70s, when they were first promulgated, *Miranda*, *Roe* v. *Wade*, and (more grudgingly) the school-prayer decisions are

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tolerated if not embraced by a majority of Americans.

Because its decisions don't provoke public outrage, the Rehnquist Court's arrogance may be harder to discern. But it is there in spades: indeed, the Court's passive-aggressive attitude toward popular opinion is part of its strategic concern for its own institutional prerogatives above all. Rehnquist's achievement as chief justice has been to reconcile his liberal and conservative colleagues to the aggrandizement of the Supreme Court's power at the expense of Congress and the state legislatures. In the process, he and his colleagues have turned themselves into the mirror images of the Warren Court justices they spent their early careers attacking.

THE SEVEN-TO-TWO DECISION reaffirming *Miranda* offers a stark example of the Rehnquist Court's preference for broad rather than narrow pronouncements. And it undermines the claim that this Court practices judicial minimalism—that is, a preference for saying as little as possible. As an associate justice in the '70s, Rehnquist himself insisted that the *Miranda* warnings were not compelled by the Constitution. But, writing for the Court last week in the *Dickerson* case, Rehnquist not only repudiated his former criticisms; he refused to acknowledge he had changed his mind. (This distaste for confessing error is typical; the Rehnquist Court has a habit of pretending even the most misguided Supreme Court precedents are infallible, as in *Casey*, when a plurality of justices held their noses and reaffirmed *Roe* without revealing whether or not they thought it was correctly decided.) In *Dickerson*, Rehnquist imperiously asserted the Court's exclusive authority to interpret the Constitution in the face of contradictory congressional judgments. "Congress may not legislatively supersede our decisions interpreting and applying the Constitution," he intoned.

A more modest decision upholding *Miranda* might have insisted that the Constitution requires all suspects to be informed of their right to remain silent, because an unwarned suspect might mistakenly believe he could be punished for his silence. But the ruling could have gone on to invite Congress to come up with alternative and equally effective ways of informing suspects of that right—without demanding that police recite the magic words. Instead of encouraging a constitutional dialogue with Congress, Rehnquist swatted Congress away like a pesky fly.

The *Sante Fe* case, which struck down a Texas ordinance authorizing student-led prayer before a high school football game, also probably reached the correct result, but, in the process, it resorted to unnecessarily sweeping reasoning that aggrandized judicial power. The Texas ordinance authorized students to vote on whether or not to include "a statement or invocation" in the pregame ceremonies; if they voted yes, a second vote would elect a student from a list of volunteers to deliver the statement or invocation. The central, and difficult, question in the *Sante Fe* case was whether students elected to deliver an invocation under this policy were engaging in private religious speech on public property, which the Constitution permits, or school-sponsored religious speech, which it forbids. The policy required that "any message and/or invocation delivered by a student must be nonsectarian and nonproselytizing," and the Court might simply have held that by censoring and monitoring the prayers, the school impermissibly dictated and took responsibility for their content.

Writing for a six-to-three majority, however, Justice John Paul Stevens made a broader argument. He held that the pregame speech could not be considered a public forum open to all students on equal terms: by requiring students to hold a majority vote on whether or not they wanted to hear a prayer or statement and then electing a student to deliver it, the school inevitably stifled minority viewpoints. But this isn't entirely convincing: if the students had elected an "inspirational orator" to speak about whatever he or she liked before every game, without any advance monitoring by school officials or notice to the student body, it's hard to argue that it would be unconstitutional if some of the orators chose to pray.

Perhaps aware of the flimsiness of his argument, Stevens switched gears and invoked the most extreme precedents from the era of '70s church/state separationism. He held that the pregame policy was unconstitutional because its history suggested that it was based on a "sham" rather than a "sincere" secular purpose. If the majority chose one student to pray over the public-address system, Stevens continued, other students might have to endure what he called "a personally offensive religious ritual." This reasoning is treacherous. As Stephen Carter of Yale Law School observes, some evangelical Christians regard the truth of Scripture not as a religious belief but as the divinely revealed word of God. If the speech of the majority may be restricted to avoid giving offense to the minority, these Christians might object to

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teaching evolution on the grounds that it offends their belief in creationism. By focusing on the law's predominant purpose rather than its actual effects, Stevens called into question moments of silence and other genuinely neutral opportunities for private rather than public religious expression.

Then there is abortion. In striking down Nebraska's partial-birth abortion law, a five-to-four majority held that the law violated the rights recognized in *Roe* v. *Wade* and reaffirmed in *Casey* v. *Planned Parenthood*: namely, the right to choose abortion before fetal viability without undue interference from the state. Because the Nebraska law was so vaguely drafted that it could be construed to forbid the most common method of second-trimester abortion and because it contained no exception for a woman's health, the Court plausibly struck it down. But it is surely significant that not a single state has passed the abortion restriction that the *Casey* court recognized as constitutional—a ban on third-trimester abortions that contains an exception for the woman's health. This suggests how dramatically the *Roe* and *Casey* decisions continue to polarize the abortion debate. By reaffirming *Roe* without justifying its reasoning, the *Casey* decision galvanized pro-life activists who seem less concerned with saving the lives of viable fetuses than with scoring political points by passing symbolic but emotionally inflammatory restrictions on abortion—and then waiting for judges to strike them down.

The current judicial overconfidence is hardly limited to the moderate and liberal justices. In striking down all or part of 25 federal laws since 1995, many in the name of federalism, conservative majorities on the Rehnquist Court have displayed a similar contempt for legislative prerogatives. When it invalidated the Violence Against Women Act, for instance, the five-to-four conservative majority refused to defer to extensive congressional findings that violence against women affected interstate commerce. When the Court held that the Eleventh Amendment bars Congress from authorizing age-discrimination suits against the states, the same majority ignored constitutional text and history. In the federalism decisions, Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas displayed the same overconfidence that, in the *Miranda* decisions, they rightly assailed as "the very Cheops' Pyramid (or perhaps the Sphinx would be a better analogue) of judicial arrogance."

What explains the transformation of Rehnquist and his colleagues from advocates of judicial restraint to avatars of judicial supremacy? Perhaps the polarizing rhetoric of the campaign against Warrenism caused both sides to exaggerate their positions and to forget the most important ingredient of judicial restraint—a willingness to acknowledge uncertainty. Perhaps the fact that Congress and the president are divided emboldens the Court to flex its muscles—secure, like the Cowardly Lion, that its feints of strength will not be challenged. Perhaps the justices are so eager for consensus in controversial cases that they are papering over their differences by adopting simplistic reasons rather than grappling with complexity. Regardless of the explanation, the outcome is clear: resentment from the other branches, unconvincing law, and the unfortunate resurrection of a judicial style that liberal and conservative defenders of judicial humility had hoped was buried for good. ■

Communism versus prostitution.

Sexual Revolution

By Silvana Paternostro

HAVANA

A WEEK IN HAVANA, and no *jineteras* in sight. *Jineteras*, Spanish for "jockeys," is the nickname given the stunning local women who cater to the mostly Italian, Spanish, French, Swiss, and Canadian men who have flocked to Cuba by the hundreds of thousands in recent years. But now the women are almost impossible to find. They've abandoned Quinta Avenida, the palm-tree-lined boulevard that crosses the fancy Miramar neighborhood. They are gone from the cobbled streets of colonial Habana Vieja, with its open-air cafés playing the traditional music that only tourists like to hear. They've vanished from the Malecón, the seawall where they used to stand, and from the Riviera, the hotel Fidel Castro confiscated from Meyer Lansky, which housed their favorite nightclub. Incredibly, prostitution seems to have disappeared from Cuba.

"A pair of high heels, a luxurious little shoe, a seductive perfume, a new dress cannot be the price of honor and the sustenance of a nation," Castro, sounding like a hurt father, proclaimed at the Karl Marx Theater in January 1999, stepping up his war against Cuban women who accept gifts or money from foreign men. In a speech attacking the rise of crime in general, Castro announced he was sending the *jineteras* home, back to the rural villages from which most of them had escaped to Havana. Any girl seen roaming the capital, dancing all night, dressed in extravagant clothes, Castro warned, would be sent to rehabilitation. "It hurts too much that a country that has done so much to dignify women, that a foreigner can come to trick her, fill her with vices ... to corrupt her," he said. Havana, he told the

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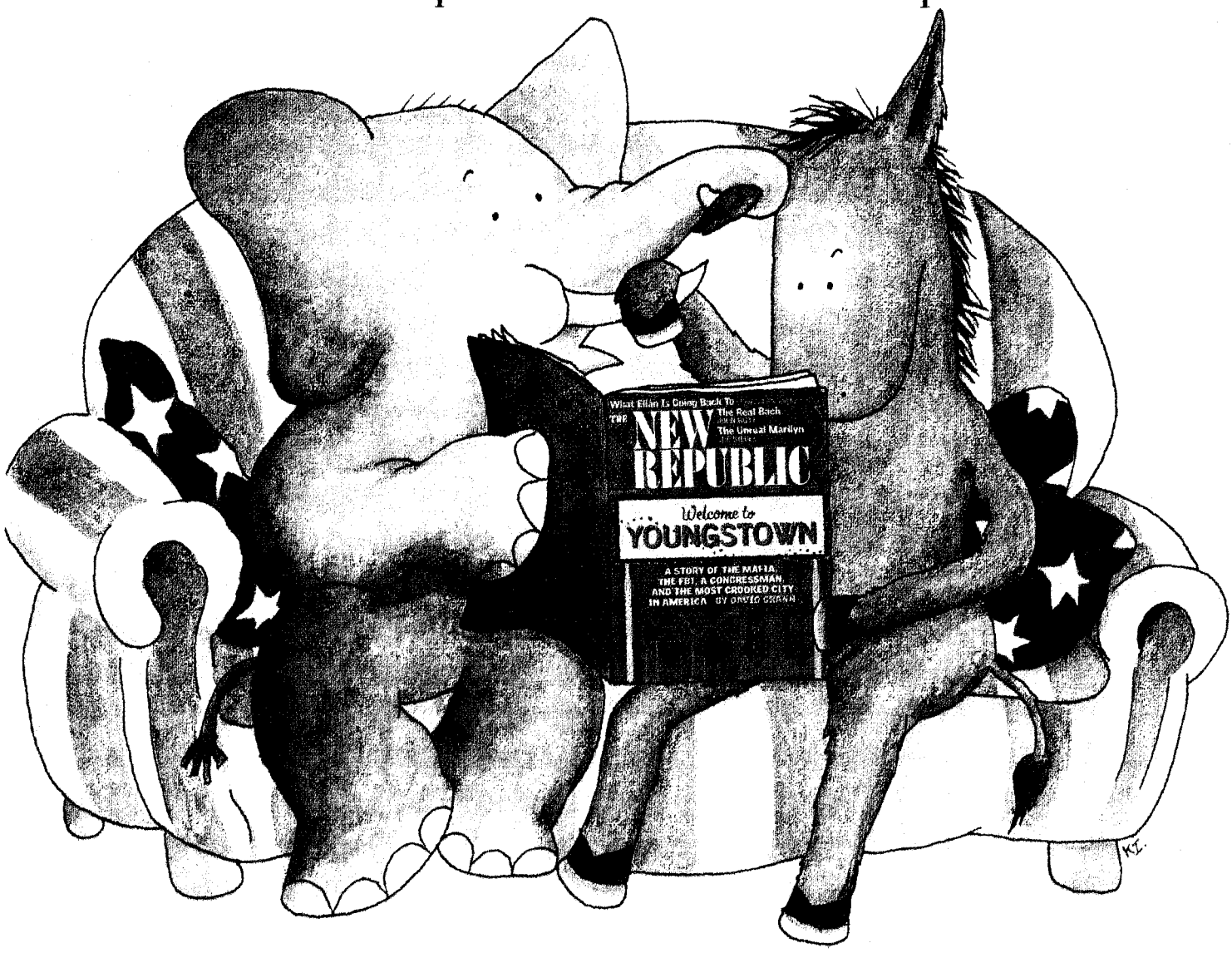
What Ellen Is Going Back To
The Real Bach
The Unreal Marilyn
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Welcome to
YOUNGSTOWN
A STORY OF THE MAFIA, THE FBI, A CONGRESSMAN, AND THE MOST CROOKED CITY IN AMERICA

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National Revolutionary Police, must rid itself of the "mercantilist" practices these women were embracing. He announced he was sending the Special Brigades out to the street and promised, "We will win this battle!"

Yet Castro's campaign against prostitution is not mainly about higher moral standards; it is mainly about state control. By earning lots of hard currency and embracing conspicuous consumption, the *jineteras* had come to embody the "dollar mentality" that the Cuban government perceived as a threat. At elementary schools like the one Elián González will return to, where children still pledge "to be the pioneers of communism" and "to be like Che," *jineteras* were becoming role models. Cubans, Castro feared, were losing the "antibodies" needed to resist the "capitalist virus." In the strange world that is Castro's Cuba, prostitution was coming to represent a political threat.

THERE WAS A time, not long ago, when the Cuban government felt differently about the young women it now proscribes. Strapped for hard currency after the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba opened up to capitalism a little—and used its women as bait. The ministry of tourism embarked on a global marketing campaign advertising the splendor of the country's revolutionary mulattas: it invited *Playboy* to photograph an issue on location and distributed posters of beaches with white sand and topless Cubanas to travel agencies worldwide.

The government referred to the women as "promoters of tourism," and, in a speech to the National Assembly in 1992, Castro said:

> There are no women forced to sell themselves to a man, to a foreigner, to a tourist. Those who do so do it on their own, voluntarily and without any need for it. We can say that they are highly educated *jineteras* and quite healthy, because we are in the country with the lowest number of AIDS cases.... Therefore, there is truly no tourism healthier than Cuba's.

The campaign was wildly successful. In 1990, 300,000 tourists visited Cuba; last year, more than 1.7 million did. And, while it is difficult to know how many were lured by the *jineteras*, there's no doubt that Cuba became one of the most popular stops on the sex-vacation circuit, right up there with Thailand. A contributor to the Internet's World Sex Guide offered this effusion about the Cuban playground: "A guy with enough hard currency can have the time of his life in what is probably the most romantic city in the world—with, in my humble opinion, the most drop-dead gorgeous, sultry, tanned beauties in the hemisphere."

These "beauties" were never referred to as "prostitutes" or "call girls." "Prostitute" connotes victimization; "call girl" suggests high society. *Jineteras* fall into neither category. Nurses, dentists, nutritionists, lawyers, teachers, high school students—they pranced around the city clad in yellow or purple or black Lycra, hoping to meet foreigners. Economically, their double lives made sense. Teachers and health workers, the pride of the revolution, earned state salaries too meager to consistently put a full meal on the dinner table. By contrast, entertaining an *extranjero* brought them meals of pork or chicken, and possibly lobster and wine—not to mention clothes, shoes, perfume, hard currency, and the possibility of romance, marriage, and a life in, say, Italy or Spain. For young women without relatives in Miami or Madrid, associating with foreign men was the only way to acquire the fancy clothing, boom boxes, and beauty products that most of the island wanted.

And they weren't acquiring these things only for themselves. "Most families were dependent on *jineteras*," says a diplomat. A 52-year-old woman told me that the best advice she could give her 14-year-old niece was "to start making herself pretty so that she could land a foreigner." Because *jineteras* were helping the people around them, few Cubans deemed their behavior shameful. In fact, the verb *jinetear* means to engage in an activity no more sinister than going to the movies or the beach. A study done by the University of Havana concluded that it was impossible to know how many *jineteras* there were, because most worked "intermittently."

But, as the *jineteras* grew more popular with Cuban society, they grew less popular with the Cuban government. Their ethic of consumption, entrepreneurship, and autonomy was infecting large swaths of the population. The prostitution Castro hoped would revive the Cuban economy was having social and even ideological effects his government could not control. And so last year the government did an about-face. It labeled these "quite healthy" testaments to Cuban womanhood *peligrosas*, or "dangerous." The ubiquitous Special Brigades of the Revolutionary National Police began stopping them, accusing these former "promoters of tourism" of *agredio al extranjero*—"harassing foreigners." The war against the *jineteras* was on. But, as I would soon discover, it is a war the Cuban government cannot afford to lose and cannot afford to win.

ON THE CORNER of a dark street a few blocks from the Malecón, just steps from four- and five-star hotels, I see a nightclub called Las Vegas. Two young women walk up, dressed almost identically in matching tight black minidresses and very high heels. A pair of Special Brigade officers approach them. From a distance, I see the women adjust their dresses, open their handbags, stand firm on their luxurious heels, and hand over their *carnets*, identification cards—which had better say they are from Havana.

The police return the documents. The doorman unhooks the dusty velvet rope. The two pay the $5 cover charge and walk into the club. I follow them into a dark, smoky room with a red vinyl bar illuminated by Christmas lights, a pool table, and a cheap cabaret show. Here are all the *jineteras* I had not seen on the street: a mulatta in leopard-print pants, a petite blonde in a long burgundy dress, a beautiful woman in a brown velvet pants suit, a young woman with a shaved head and legs like Tina Turner's. The flirting is multilingual. The women speak broken Italian with the Italians, broken French with the French; they try English with the Canadians, the Australians, and the few Americans. Scott, a 28-year-old from Long Island, is kissing 18-year-old Larissa, whom he met five minutes before, and she has her hands on his pant

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buttons. She wanted $40 at first, but, because he was cute and from New York, she told him she would do it for "whatever." His friend Rob has already given $20, as a gift, to beautiful Yaritza of the languid eyes—because she told him she has a two-year-old to feed.

This is the Havana that so threatens the government—an underworld obsessed with capitalism and independence in a society that demands socialism or death. And yet, even now, Cuba relies on the *jineteras*. Nightclubs are, after all, state-owned and state-run, and tourism brings in $1.4 billion each year. Castro doesn't want capitalism, but he needs money. He wants the *jineteras* to dance with the foreigners to create revenue for the revolution but not for themselves. The government doesn't mind what they sell but hates the frivolous things they want to buy. Cuba is experiencing the kind of raw capitalist turbulence you see in Russia, but here it is taking place in the shadow of a still-Communist state. And, because Castro himself seems unable to deal with these contradictions, places like the Las Vegas continue to operate, making money for the revolution and eroding it at the same time. "Here everything is illegal," a 33-year-old artist told me. "But everything is done."

I go over to the two girls I saw on the street and ask what the police wanted. "Same thing they always want," says the skinnier of the two, rolling her eyes. Yanet, who is from Sancti Spíritus, a province 200 miles east of Havana, tells me that she tricks the Special Brigade by saying she lives with her father in Centro Habana (which is true) and that she has come to Havana to enroll in school, studying hygiene and epidemiology (which is also true, though misleading, since she does not attend classes).

Yanet and Yanari tell me more than what they tell the police. They came to Havana together three years ago "to do exactly this," as Yanet puts it. Yanet had finished her first year in college, studying biology in her native hamlet. When she realized that, after five years of schooling, she would get a job worth $10 a month, she convinced Yanari, whom she knew from high school, to take the train to Havana with her. They arrived during the golden days, when *jineteras* went unharassed, and were soon living in luxury—by Cuban standards, anyway. They rented a room for $3 a day and had plenty of money to buy clothes and do their hair. Yanet even bought a big television and a videocassette recorder.

Then came the crackdown. Yanet, who turned 20 in March, now has two pending fines and two *cartas de advertencia*, letters of warning. She has already been sent back to Sancti Spíritus once. Right after Castro's "famous speech," she was dancing at El Johnny, her favorite hangout, wearing a brand-new red Lycra unitard open all the way down below her navel, when she was whisked outside by a female plain-clothes cop who took her to the precinct. "She had already stopped me once," says Yanet, but the Colombian client with whom she was spending the week had said, to protect her, that she was his fiancée. "He was, of course, married in Colombia," she adds.

This time, however, the Colombian wasn't there. And so Yanet spent the night at the precinct while the police gathered up enough *jineteras* to fill a van. The next day, it was off to Villa Delicia, one of the so-called rehabilitation camps, where she stayed for ten days, waking up early and working at a different place every day. She cleaned bathrooms, picked up trash, and plucked dead chickens—all in her red unitard. Yet the worst moment, she says, was when she saw her mother, a card-carrying member of the Communist Party and a pediatrician about to go on a mission to Guinea. The authorities had summoned her to pick up her daughter from the station. "They do that to humiliate you," Yanet says indignantly. She stayed in Sancti Spíritus a few months, fell in love, and ventured back to the capital with her new boyfriend.

I want to know more about him, but a thin Spaniard in his early thirties calls her away. She jots down her number on a napkin, tells me I can call her anytime, and walks toward him. I move to the bar, where I encounter a Russian computer engineer who lives in Israel and is here on holiday. I ask him, as he tries to disentangle himself from the advances of a young beauty, if this reminds him of his old country. "No way," he says, pointing to the illegal gambling at the pool table. "This is not communism. This is promiscuous communism. There are no hard-liners here."

BUT THERE ARE still some hard-liners left. Inside the halls of the Federation of Cuban Women (or FMC, its Spanish acronym), which prides itself on having rehabilitated 100,000 of the prostitutes from Batista's days, I ask two of its officials how they feel about the resurgence of prostitution—and whether there is any real difference between Batista's prostitutes and Castro's. "There is a *big* difference between the prostitutes of those days and the prostitutes now," snaps Alicia González, as we sip coffee amid pink walls and blue velvet couches probably left behind by the owners of the mansion that now houses the organization. "They are different in their quality. Before, they had no schooling; they had health problems. These young women are healthy and educated. Before, they did it to feed their children. Here, there are economic problems, but they are not of the same magnitude. Here, their children go to school, go to the doctor. They are not going to starve to death. Look even at what they are called, *jineteras*, because it is she who dominates the animal," says González almost with pride. Thanks to the revolution, these are empowered prostitutes.

The problem, in other words, is not what the *jineteras* are doing—prostitution is still not a crime—but what they want to do with what they are doing. What infuriates González is that "these are women who think differently from the values of the revolution." The *jineteras* value entrepreneurship and competitiveness—bad things—not the "exercise of solidarity and the progressive integration of society" that the FMC would like them to embrace. "These women are doing it because they don't want to ride the bus, they want shoes of many colors, and they want to use the sanitary napkins they sell at the dollar stores," González explains—as if it were astonishing that a young woman would prefer not to ride in a crammed trailer, own just one pair of shoes, or use torn rags during menstruation. "It is hard to change people's mentality. Regardless of how hard we have tried for forty years to instill the mentality of the New Man, it is very hard to change

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people's minds. They don't want to sacrifice."

For the revolution, "sacrifice" is a key buzzword. When they swore at school "to be like Che," it meant to live like he did—to enjoy working for society, not for profit. When Che got married, he gave up his honeymoon, because revolutionaries must show austerity in their personal lives. He forced his wife to refuse a pair of Italian leather shoes she was offered as a gift, and he donated his watch to the island's gold reserves. As recounted in Jon Lee Anderson's *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*, shortly after being named president of the National Bank, Che met with the architect commissioned to build a new headquarters, a 32-story American-style skyscraper. Che, with a straight face, demanded that the number of bathrooms be halved and prohibited the installation of elevators. If he could walk up stairs, with his asthma, why couldn't everyone else? The architect told Che that revolutionaries have the same physiological needs as everyone else. "Not the New Man," responded Che. "He can sacrifice."

The women of the FMC see the *jineteras*' rejection of sacrifice as an ethical lapse. But it is actually the yearning, distorted by a distorting system, for a freer life—a yearning made possible by the very things, health and education, that the revolution gave them. The *jineteras*' wants sound very much like the wants of any young woman in Madrid, Miami, Mexico, or Moscow—money, yes, but also the right to make her own choices. The hard-liners call the new consumption immoral and apolitical, but they fear it because they know it is not apolitical at all—it is a revolt against a state that tries to dictate their lives.

I INVITE YANET, the *jinetera* I met at the Las Vegas, and her boyfriend to meet me for a drink at the Cohiba Meliá, the glitzy five-star hotel that Cubans love to visit and government officials prefer they don't. Yanet, sitting on a gray sofa in the spacious lobby, looks elegant in a silvery-blue suit. To meet me here, she got dressed up in a jacket, pants, and black high heels; she carries a bag with a thin gold-link chain. Her dark curls are tied back in a dancer's chignon, making her almond-shaped ebony eyes and full mouth so pronounced that it is hard to miss their beauty and their youth. Sitting very close to her is a young man in a starched white oxford shirt. Their knees are touching, and he holds her hand. They stand up politely to greet me. She kisses me on the cheek and introduces me to him.

"*Mi novio*," she says.

"Alexei," he says, extending his hand.

"A Russian name?" I say, thinking aloud more than meaning to say it. I'm always intrigued to meet twenty-somethings named Lenin Rodríguez, Vladimir Gómez, Natasha Perez. He throws his head back a bit. "*Si*, because of the *Sovieticos*," he says, letting out a somewhat embarrassed laugh. "My parents, they are super-revolutionaries."

Yanet and Alexei both have that look of defiance mixed with trepidation that comes from being at a "tourist spot," a place designated by their government as off-limits. They know a security guard would ask them to leave if I were not there, although it is hard to see this clean-cut, well-mannered couple in the same way the government sees them. They look more like college sophomores than outlaws.

They have known each other all their lives, but their relationship kindled only after Yanet's arrest, when she returned from her first stint in Havana. Like Yanet, Alexei felt frustrated. After high school, he had wanted a career with the armed forces. When he saw a blueprint of Soviet artillery, however, he left. "I wanted a career for today's world," he tells me. But the opportunities for that are slim in Sancti Spíritus: He picked fruit and vegetables for the state and painted bicycles at the state-owned shop. He had just quit, angry that he had to ruin his clothes to make the equivalent of $5 a month, when Yanet entered his life, and they decided to venture to Havana together. For Yanet it was less risky to go with a man; for him it was an opportunity to leave. "For us to have a future," he explains, "we have to come to the city and do things that are normal anywhere else but here make you into a criminal." He earns money by selling fake jewelry to friends and neighbors. For each ring he sells, he makes $2. But, like Yanet, he can also be arrested.

They live in her grandmother's home, a one-bedroom apartment in Centro Habana, with her grandmother, her father, and a cousin. But with her dollars Yanet is building a *barbacoa*, Cuban for an improvised and illegal loft bed, above the kitchen. I ask her if her father, a black doctor in his early forties who is grateful to the revolution, knows where she gets the dollars to buy the paint, the cement, the two soft pillows, the small tape player, the CDs, and the three pairs of shoes she owns. She shrugs and tells me that they don't really get along, that they fight—often about politics. Yanet mocks her father's revolutionary fervor by asking him about his Lada, the Soviet-made car that the government "allowed" him to buy but that he had to give back when he left to volunteer in Angola. Yanet was eight when he returned; he still talks about getting his car back. "So, when he talks about the revolution, I just ask him: 'And when are they giving you the car?' There are three hundred doctors who volunteered in Angola waiting for their Ladas back."

When Yanet and Alexei are ready to leave, we stand outside the hotel, facing the Malecón. The night is cold and breezy. The Atlantic Ocean that recalls for Cubans so many painful stories of tragedy and separation is deeply agitated. Yanet looks toward the horizon and says, "I hope there's no one out there tonight." She means rafters.

"Will you want to live elsewhere?" I ask.

"Sure," says Yanet, as she pulls her jacket tight against the wind from the ocean and the spray from the waves that crash against the Malecón. "But not that way." She points out to the sea. "I would like to go to Madrid. Or to Italy. Not Germany—I don't think I'd like it there. Not Switzerland, either—sounds too cold. And definitely not Miami."

But what she would really like, she says, is a place here—a home where she and Alexei can live. She plays with her ring, a cluster of rhinestones the size of pinheads, the kind that Alexei sells. "If I don't kill and I don't steal, why can't I? All I want is a house of my own to keep clean and pretty, and have a TV and a few nice things. Why is this so wrong?" It's not a dream of sacrifice, but it may be a dream of revolution nonetheless. She nestles up to Alexei, away from the Malecón's rain. He shelters her with his arm. ■

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The city that fell in love with the mob.

Crimetown USA

By David Grann

There was a certain tidiness to the killings in Youngstown. Usually they happened late at night when there were no witnesses or police and only the lights from the steel furnaces still burned. Sometimes neighbors would hear the short, sharp sound of gunfire and then nothing, a silence you can't describe unless you've heard it, which if you're lucky you haven't.

Everyone suspected who the killers were—they lived in the neighborhood, sometimes just down the street—but no one could ever prove anything. Sometimes their methods were simple: a bullet to the back of the head or a bomb strapped under the hood of a car. Or sometimes, like when they got Mr. Magda, they allowed for the more dramatic, tranquilizing their victim with a stun gun and wrapping his head in tape until he could no longer breathe.

Yet the most frightening method, the one that captured the city's imagination, was the most immaculate: the disappearance of people in broad daylight. They were the city's ghosts. Police found their cars empty on the side of the street, the engines still warm, or their dinner tables still piled with food. They had, in the most classic sense, been "rubbed out." The only sign of the killers was an artistic flourish: the dozen long-stemmed white roses victims often received just before they vanished.

So, when Lenny Strollo ordered the hit that summer night in 1996, there was no reason to believe it would go down any differently. As the top Mafia don in Ohio's Mahoning Valley, he presided over the killings and disappearances in and around Youngstown from his farm in nearby Canfield, where he tended his gardens and ate vitamins to quiet his heart. His reach extended over nearly an entire corner of the state, a stretch of land that was home to more than 200,000 people and that had become, by all accounts, the most crooked county in America—a place, in the modern era, where the Mafia still held sway over every element of society, from the police to the judges to the politicians. Only months earlier, Strollo had ordered his main mob rival mowed down as he drove to work. But this time his choice of target was more brazen: the newly elected county prosecutor, Paul Gains.

The Mafia didn't ordinarily "take out" public officials, but the 45-year-old prosecutor had so far resisted all the customary overtures, bribes, and campaign contributions, and it was now widely rumored that he planned to hire as his chief investigator the man the Mafia hated most: Bob Kroner, the local FBI agent who had spent 20 years pursuing the mob. In Mafia fashion, Strollo employed endless layers of authority so that nothing could be traced back to him. First he gave the order to Bernie the Jew, the man he relied on for all his muscle. Bernie, in turn, hired Jeffrey Riddle, a black drug dealer turned assassin who was obsessed with the Mafia and, according to friends, boasted that he'd one day be *the first nigger ever inducted into the family.* Riddle then brought in his own two-man team: Mark Batcho, a fastidious criminal who ran one of the most sophisticated burglary crews in the country, and Antwan "Mo Man" Harris, a crack dealer who, though he still lived with his mother, had already committed at least two other murders.

That Christmas Eve, as Batcho and Harris later

KEVIN SWEENEY

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recounted, the three men loaded up on everything they needed: walkie-talkies, ski masks, gloves, a bag of cocaine, a police scanner, and a .38 revolver. Around eight o'clock in the evening, they drove out to the prosecutor's home, in a Youngstown suburb dotted with strip malls. The houses glowed with Christmas lights. But, when they arrived, no one was home. Batcho got out of the car and waited behind a lamppost near the garage. He attached a speed loader to the revolver to enable him to shoot faster and tested the voice-activated walkie-talkie. No one responded. He tried again. Nothing. He couldn't believe it. Here they were asking him to carry out the premier Mafia hit in years and the equipment was busted. He ran back to the car and said he couldn't kill anyone without "communication."

Batcho, Harris, and Riddle regrouped at the Giant Eagle Supermarket on Route 224 and programmed two of their cell phones so they could dial each other at the touch of a button. As they eased up in front of the house again, they noticed that a car was in the driveway and the kitchen lights were on. "OK," Riddle said, shoving the gun back in Batcho's hand, "get out and go do this."

BATCHO JUMPED OUT of the car, carrying the bag of cocaine Riddle had instructed him to plant on the body to make it look like a drug-related killing. He crept up to the house, his heart pounding. The garage door was open, and he said, "Hey, mister, hey, mister," but no one answered, and he kept walking. The side door to the house was open, too, and he could hear someone speaking. He decided to go in. Creeping down the corridor, he heard Gains talking on the phone in the kitchen. Batcho rushed in, pointed the gun at the prosecutor's midsection, and fired. As Gains fell to the ground, Batcho fired again. Blood spilled from two wounds—one in his forearm, the other in his side. Batcho took another step closer as Gains put up his hands to ward him off.

Batcho aimed near Gains's heart and pulled the trigger. But the gun kicked back in his hand, jamming. *Jesus fuckin' Christ!* Batcho turned and ran out of the house, stumbling into the woods in back. He tripped and fell and, getting back up, hit the button on the cell phone, screaming, *It's done! It's done! Come pick me up!* As he came out of the woods, he saw the car approaching down the street and lurched toward it, jumping into the backseat. He crouched down, shivering. "Did you kill him?" Harris and Riddle asked.

"I think so," Batcho said uncertainly.

"You don't know?" Riddle said.

"The gun jammed," Batcho said, "the gun jammed."

Harris looked at him coolly. "Why didn't you go in the drawer and get a steak knife and stab him to death?" he asked.

Riddle said they had to go back and finish the job, but just then the police scanner crackled with news of the shooting. Riddle hit the gas and started swerving along the back roads. Fearing they'd get pulled over, Harris took the gun and threw it out the window. But the speed loader was missing. *Where the fuck is the speed loader?* they started screaming at each other. Then from the scanner came even worse news: Gains was still alive.

It was one of the least skillful murder attempts in the valley's history: the speed loader was found outside the house, along with a clean footprint; a sketch of the shooter appeared in the paper within days. But, ironically, the crime scene was so messy that investigators couldn't believe Strollo's people were behind it—not even Gains, who told friends, *If the mob had done it, I'd be dead.* Batcho, who had begun to wear disguises around town, slowly emerged from hiding. Amazingly, it looked as if these murderers would get away as well, until one spring night the prosecutor got a phone call at home. "Are you Paul Gains?" a woman asked.

"Yes," he said, "who's this?"

"I know who shot you," she said.

When the woman rattled off details about the crime that few could have known, Gains called the police, who brought in the FBI. "I know everything," she told the agents who rushed to her apartment the next day. "I know other people they shot. I know everything."

And so it happened. The call, from the ex-girlfriend of an associate of the hit men, helped solve a mob hit for the first time in the valley's history. But, coupled with a three-year covert operation by the FBI, it would ultimately help uncover something far broader. It would slowly untangle what authorities describe as one of the last truly mob-run counties in the country: a place where the Mafia still controlled a chief of police, the outgoing prosecutor, the sheriff, the county engineer, members of the local police force, a city law director, several defense attorneys, politicians, judges, and a former assistant U.S. attorney; a place whose residents had grown so used to a culture of corruption that they viewed it casually, even proudly; a place, in a sliver of America, where a malignant way of life was left largely untouched for almost 100 years. Now, after more than 70 convictions, the investigation has wound its way to the most powerful politician in the region, a man whom the FBI caught on tape with the mob nearly 20 years ago but who has eluded them ever since: United States Congressman James Traficant.

TODAY, THE MAHONING VALLEY is one of the most depressed corners of America. But it wasn't economic bust that first brought the mob to the valley; it was economic boom. In the early years of the twentieth century, the valley—a thin corridor of land that twists and turns its way through northern Ohio—was the heart of an industrial empire. Steel mills stretched as far as the eye could see, their furnaces streaking the sky with 15-foot flames. For more than 50 years, their lights drew immigrants—Poles and Greeks and Italians and Slovaks who thought they had found the Ruhr Valley of America—as well as a burgeoning class of racketeers who thought they had found their own "Little Chicago." Youngstown's streets were lined with after-hours joints, where the steelworkers drank and played Barbut, a Turkish dice game, and where capos, dressed in white-brimmed hats and armed with stilettos, ran the numbers, or "bug," as the locals called it. Youngstown in the 1940s wasn't particularly unusual. Like Chicago, Buffalo, or Detroit, it had a teeming

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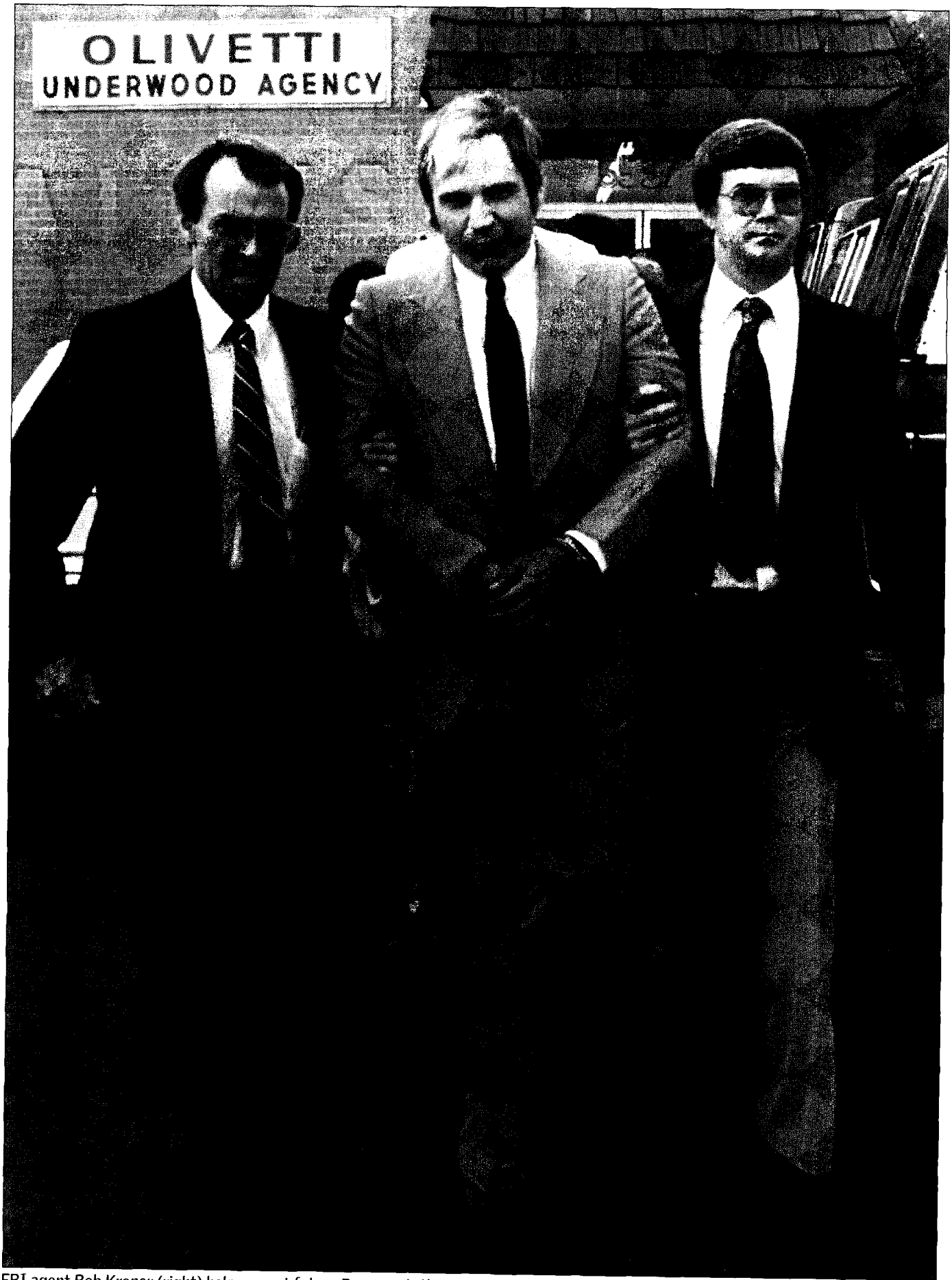

YOUNGSTOWN VINDICATOR

FBI agent Bob Kroner (right) helps escort future Representative James Traficant to his 1982 arraignment for allegedly taking $163,000 in bribes from the mob. He was acquitted at trial.

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immigrant population accustomed to arbitrary and violent authority, a booming economy, and pliable local politicians and police—all the ingredients the mob needed to flourish.

But, unlike those larger cities, Youngstown was too small to have a mob family of its own. And, as a result, it turned into a battlefield. By 1950, as the rackets mushroomed into a multimillion-dollar industry, the Pittsburgh and Cleveland Mafia families began fighting for control of the region. Bombings began to ricochet through the valley—warnings to those who allied themselves with the wrong side. It got so bad over the next two decades that the local radio station ran public-service ads featuring an earsplitting bang and the slogan "Stop the bomb!" In 1963, *The Saturday Evening Post* dubbed the area "Crimetown U.S.A.," noting: "Officials hobnob openly with criminals. Arrests of racketeers are rare, convictions rarer still and tough sentences almost unheard of."

Shortly after Bob Kroner arrived in the valley in 1976 as a 29-year-old FBI agent, a full-scale war broke out. On one side was Joey Naples's and Lenny Strollo's faction, which was controlled by the Pittsburgh Mafia; on the other were the Carabbia brothers—known in town as simply "Charlie the Crab" and "Orlie the Crab"—who were aligned with Cleveland. "It seemed like you'd get up every morning and get in your car and hear someone else had been murdered," says Kroner.

First there were "Spider" and "Peeps"—two petty cons hit within a few weeks of each other. Then came one of Naples's drivers, shot as he changed a tire in his driveway, and a crony of Peeps's, who was gunned down outside his apartment. Then, poor John Magda, who was discovered, his head wrapped in tape, at the dump in Struthers, and, next, a small-time bookie who refused to go easily—he was first bombed and later shot through his living-room window while he watched television with his wife. Then, Joey DeRose Sr., killed by accident when he was mistaken for his son, a Carabbia assassin; and finally, a few months later, the son, too. "Oh my God, they got Joey," his girlfriend screamed when police told her they had found her car burning on a country road between Cleveland and Akron.

A FORMER HIGH SCHOOL math teacher who turned in his books for a badge in 1971, Kroner quickly plunged into this underworld. He could be seen in town, in his neatly pressed suit and tie, trailing reputed hit men and banging on the doors of the All-American Club. Though he came from a family of cops, Kroner didn't look like one: he was too tall and slender, almost delicate, and he lacked the easy manner of the police who played craps in the shadow of the courthouse. He wore penny loafers in a city where most people wore boots, and he had a certain stiffness, as if he were a substitute teacher who feared he might lose control of his class.

Unlike his FBI predecessor, who, according to the agency's own affidavit and informants, had allegedly consorted with gangsters and was later appointed Youngstown's chief of police at the Mafia's behest, Kroner was hostile to the local dons. Prickly and shy, he spent hours alone in his small office, smoking cigarettes and listening to intercepted conversations between the different gangs. He made little diagrams of each family, to which he added further details whenever he received a tip from an informant. He did everything he could to bring down their enterprise: tapping their phones, tailing their cars, subpoenaing their friends. In other words, he was, as Strollo and his cronies put it, a "motherfucker."

One day in the spring of 1981, not long after Charlie the Crab, the head of the Cleveland faction, disappeared without a trace, Kroner searched the apartment of one of the city's most notorious assassins. The apartment was cluttered with knickknacks, and Kroner and his partner went through each room carefully. In a cabinet, Kroner noticed a bread box and opened it. Inside, tucked amid the stale bread, was an audiotape. When he played it, he heard vaguely familiar voices: "He's a scared motherfucker." And: "You either play our fucking game or you['re] going to be put in a fucking box." Two of the voices, he was sure, belonged to Charlie and his brother, Orlie the Crab. But there was also another voice, one Kroner thought he recognized from television and radio. Then it dawned on him: It was Youngstown's newly elected sheriff, a former college football star named James Traficant.

LATER, ACTING ON a tip, Kroner and his partner drilled open the Carabbias' sister's safe-deposit box, where they found a similar tape with a handwritten note that said: "If I die these tapes go to the FBI in Washington. I feel I have more people after me because of these tapes and ... I pray and ask God to guide and protect my family." At headquarters, Kroner and his colleagues listened to a jumble of voices arguing about which public officials were allegedly being paid off by the rival Pittsburgh mob.

"You believe they got all them fuckin' people?" Orlie said.

"I know they got [Mayor] Vukovich," Traficant said.

"Oh, they definitely got Vukovich," said Charlie.

"I know they got Leskovansky," Traficant continued. "I know they got Haynes. I know they got Morley. I know they got Gilmartin."

"They don't have Gilmartin," said Charlie.

Traficant paused, as if running through the names in his mind. "I don't know all of them," he finally said. "But I know it's a fuckin' fistful."

With its Pittsburgh rival controlling many of the valley's politicians, the Cleveland faction knew it needed some pols of its own. And the tapes, apparently made by Charlie the Crab at two meetings during the 1980 sheriff's campaign, appeared to show them buying Traficant, a rising star. "I am a loyal fucker," Traficant informs the Carabbia brothers at one point, "and my loyalty is here, and now we've gotta set up the business that they've run for all these fuckin' years and swing that business over to you, and that's what your concern is. That's why you financed me, and I understand that."

The arrangement, according to the tapes, was an old-fashioned one: Traficant acknowledged receiving more than

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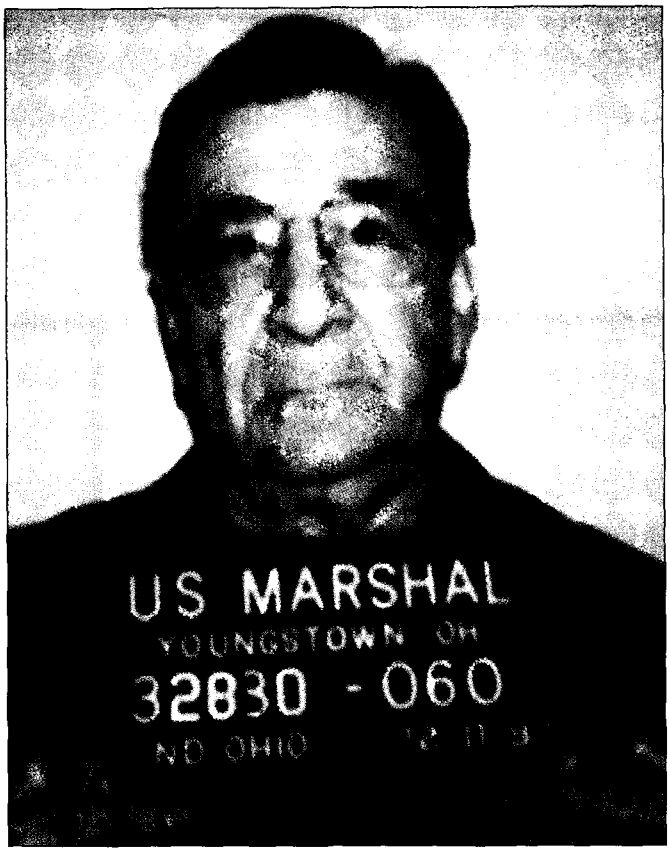

AP/WIDE WORLD

Lenny Strollo, former Mahoning Valley Mafia don.

$100,000 from the Cleveland faction for his campaign. In exchange, he'd use the sheriff's office to protect the Carabbias' rackets while shutting down their rivals. "Your uncle Tony was my goombah...," said Charlie, "and we feel that you're like a brother to us.... We don't want you to make any fuckin' mistakes." Traficant assured his benefactors that he was solid and that, if any of his deputies betrayed them, "they'll fuckin' come up swimming in [the] Mahoning River."

BUT, ACCORDING TO the tapes, Traficant wasn't primarily worried about his deputies; he was worried about the Pittsburgh mob. As Charlie knew, Traficant had accepted money from Pittsburgh, too—some $60,000, the first installment of which came with the message, "I want you to be my friend." The young candidate for sheriff was double-crossing the Pittsburgh family (he had just given over at least some of their money to Charlie the Crab to prove his loyalty), and he knew that, when they found out, they would retaliate. "Look, I don't wanna fuckin' die in six months, Charlie," Traficant said.

On the tapes, Kroner and his colleagues could hear Traficant hatching a plan to protect himself from the Pittsburgh Mafia—and the officials they controlled. "Let's look at it this way, OK?" he said. "They do have the judges.... They can get to the judges and get what they need done.... What they don't have is the sheriff, and ... I'm one step ahead." On the day he was sworn into office, Traficant said, he'd take some of the money the Pittsburgh family had given him and use it as evidence to arrest them for bribery. What's more, he described what he and the Crabs would say if their secret dealings were ever exposed: "I was so fucking pissed off at this crooked government, I came to you and asked you guys if you would assist me to break it up, and you said, 'Fuck it ... we'll do it.' OK? That's gonna be what you're gonna say in court."

"Orlie too?" asked Charlie. "He's got a bad heart—"

"*Look*...," said Traficant. "I'm not talking fucking daydreams.... If they're gonna fuck with me, I'm gonna nail them." Traficant was taken with the audacity of his plan. "If you think about it," he mused at a later point, "if I fuckin' did *that*—"

"You can run for governor," said Charlie.

They all broke into laughter.

AFTER KRONER AND his superiors reviewed the tapes, they called Traficant down to headquarters. Kroner had never met the sheriff before, and he watched as he settled into the chair across from him. Traficant was an imposing figure, with wide shoulders and thick brown hair that stuck up on top so that, at first glance, it looked like a wig. You could tell from his muscles that he had once worked in the mills, and he walked as if his joints had been worn down to the bone. As they exchanged pleasantries, Kroner told Traficant he had grown up in Pittsburgh and watched him play football at the university there—where Traficant had starred as a daring quarterback who, as one NFL scout put it, "at the most critical point in a game ... will keep the ball himself and run with it," bowling over anyone in his path.

What happened next is in dispute. According to sworn court testimony from Kroner and other agents present, Kroner asked the sheriff if he was conducting an investigation into organized crime in the valley. Traficant said he wasn't. Kroner then asked him if he knew Charlie the Crab or Orlie the Crab. Traficant said he'd only heard of them.

You never met them? Kroner asked.

No, Traficant said.

You never received money from them?

No, he said again.

Then Kroner popped in the tape:

> Traficant: "They have given sixty thousand dollars."
> Orlie the Crab: "They gave sixty. What'd we give?"
> Traficant: "OK, a hundred and three."

After only a few seconds, Traficant slumped in his seat. "I don't want to hear any more," he said, according to Kroner. "I've heard enough."

In the FBI's version of events, Traficant acknowledged he'd taken the money, and he agreed to cooperate in exchange for immunity. In front of two witnesses, he then signed a confession that read, in tiny, cursive letters: "During the period of time that I campaigned for sheriff of Mahoning County, Ohio, I accepted money ... with the understanding that certain illegal activities would be allowed to take place in Mahoning County after my election and that as sheriff I would not interfere with those activities."

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According to the FBI, it wasn't until several weeks later that Traficant recanted his confession, after learning that he would likely have to resign as sheriff and that the reason for his resignation would become public. "Do what you have to do," he told Kroner, "and I'll do what I have to do." Or, as Traficant later told the local TV station, "All those people trying to put me in jail should go fuck themselves."

The FBI did what it had to first, arresting the 41-year-old sheriff for allegedly taking $163,000 in bribes from the mob and for willfully and knowingly "combin[ing], conspir[ing], confederat[ing], and agree[ing]" with racketeers to commit crimes against the United States. Incredibly, facing up to 23 years in jail, Traficant decided to represent himself in court, even though he wasn't a lawyer and even after the judge warned him that "almost no one in his right mind" would attempt such a thing.

On the day of the trial, pacing the courtroom in a short-sleeved shirt, Traficant told the jury just what he had vowed he would say on the Carabbia tapes: that he was conducting "the most unorthodox sting in the history of Ohio politics." In a role that he said deserved "an Academy Award," Traficant told the rapt gallery that he had been acting all along as an undercover agent, trying to convince the Carabbia brothers he was on their side so he could use them to shut down the more powerful Pittsburgh faction. "What I did, and what I set out to do very carefully," he said, "was to design a plan whereby I would destroy and disrupt the political influence and the mob control over in Mahoning County."

Though he admitted taking money from the mob, Traficant said he did so only so that his opponent in the campaign wouldn't get it. And, though he acknowledged that his voice was on the tapes, he claimed they were doctored to incriminate him. And, though he agreed he had signed "a statement," he said it was different from the fraudulent "confession" the FBI introduced into evidence. And, though he confessed he had initially lied to the FBI about the sting, he said it was only because he couldn't trust its agents—one of whom, back in the '60s, was allegedly tied to the mob. Indeed, he insisted that, if the FBI hadn't intervened, he would have cleansed the most corrupt county in the country. "The point of the matter I want to make is this," he said. "I got inside of the mob." Then: "I *fucked* the mob."

It was a stunning performance. When Kroner finally took the stand and testified that he had seen Traficant sign the confession, the sheriff jumped out of his chair and yelled, "That's a goddamn lie!" During cross-examination he taunted his FBI adversary, saying, "Oh, I see" and "No, Bob." Half crazy, half charming, he referred to himself as "my client" and asked reporters, "How am I doin'?" In a region instinctively wary of outsiders, he became, by the end of his defense, an emblem of the valley. In Youngstown, people held parties on his behalf. His supporters sold T-shirts touting his heroic struggle. It didn't matter that the IRS would later find Traficant liable for taking bribes and evading taxes, in a civil trial in which he took the Fifth. Or that the money he had allegedly taken as evidence for the sting was never turned over. Or that one of his deputies claimed on the stand that Traficant had repeatedly asked the deputy to shoot him to make it look like an attempted mob hit. Traficant understood his community better than anyone else. It took a jury four days to decide to acquit. Charlie the Crab was wrong about only one thing: Traficant wouldn't become governor. He would become a United States congressman.

By the time Traficant went to Washington, D.C., in 1985, the valley was already disintegrating. The worldwide demand for steel had plummeted, plunging the area into near-permanent recession. Mills barricaded their doors. Department stores closed. At least one airline discontinued its service to the region. By the end of the decade, the population in Youngstown alone had fallen by more than 28,000, while the sky, leaden for half a century, turned almost blue.

Traficant, reelected to term after term in Congress, railed against the closings, sometimes even sounding a little like Charlie the Crab. When one of the last steel mills in the region filed for bankruptcy in the late '80s, Traficant warned: "I think this is beyond all this talking phase. If [the owner] rips off the last industrial facility ... then someone should grab him by the throat and stretch him a couple of inches." But there was nothing he or anyone else could do.

And if prosperity had brought the mob to the valley a half-century earlier, depression cemented its rule. The professional classes that did so much to break the culture of the Mafia in Chicago and Buffalo and New York in the 1970s and '80s practically ceased to exist in Youngstown. Much of the valley's middle class either left or stopped being middle-class. And so Youngstown experienced a version of what sociologists have described in the inner city. The city lost its civic backbone—its doctors and lawyers and accountants. The few upstanding civic leaders who remained were marginalized or cowed. Hierarchies of status and success and moral value became inverted. The result was a generation of Batchos, kids who worshiped the dons the way other children worshiped Mickey Mantle or Joe DiMaggio. (Batcho even tattooed a picture of a legendary mob boss on his left upper arm, telling people proudly, "[I'd] take a bullet for him.") Meanwhile, Lenny Strollo and his partners, in need of players for their cash-strapped casinos, began catering to the local drug dealers and criminals, who were the only people left with money to spend.

The mob, which had once competed with the valley's civil society, largely became its civil society. As late as 1997, in the small city of Campbell, Strollo controlled at least 90 percent of the appointments to the police department. He fixed the civil-service exam so he could pick the chief of police and nearly all the patrolmen. The city law director literally brought the list of candidates for promotion to Strollo's house so the don could select the ones he wanted. "Strollo," says an attorney familiar with the city, could "determine which murderers went to jail and which ones went free."

In 1996, while three mob hit men, including Mo Man

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Harris, were on their way to kill their latest target, they were pulled over by the Campbell police for speeding, according to people in the car. In the vehicle the cops found an AK-47 rifle, a .357 Magnum revolver, and a 9 mm pistol. One of the killers used his cell phone to call Jeff Riddle, who rushed to the scene and told the police the men were running an errand for Bernie the Jew. The cops let them go.

In the rare instances when the police arrested a reputed mobster, Strollo and his associates simply paid off the judges. There was such a sense of impunity that once in the spring of 1996, when an incorruptible judge prevented Strollo from fixing a particular assault case, he dispatched Batcho with a walkie-talkie and a silencer to wound the defense attorney so they could get a mistrial. "I said, 'Are you attorney Gary Van Brocklin?' " Batcho later recalled. "And he said, 'Yes, I am.' . . . And I shot him right in the knee." "I don't know how an honest defense attorney could make a living in this town," says Kroner's boss, Andy Arena.

And, of course, Strollo's tentacles reached the valley's representative in Congress as well. Until he was exposed in 1998, Traficant's top aide in the district, Charles O'Nesti, served as the "bagman" between Strollo and the city's corrupt public officials. (Traficant had hired O'Nesti in 1984, despite his claims on the infamous tapes that O'Nesti was a mob crony whom he would arrest as part his so-called sting to clean up the valley.) While working for Traficant, O'Nesti would meet Strollo at the don's farm or talk with him on the phone. The two even conspired to steal a stretch of city pavement as it was being laid down. "The hold that the mob has had here to this day," says Arena, "I don't think you'll see anywhere else in the United States."

THE FBI STING that would start unraveling this web of corruption began in 1994. Kroner, now middle-aged, had given up smoking through hypnotism and put several pounds on his slender frame. One morning, as he met with other agents in their cramped office in nearby Boardman Township, he could barely contain his frustration. He had just witnessed the disintegration of one of his few triumphs: 14 months after he'd nailed Strollo for gambling, his nemesis had reemerged from prison and reasserted his power. Even when we bust them, Kroner thought, they just come back.

So, after years of disappointment, Kroner and his colleagues opted for a new approach: rather than attack the mob from the top, as they had in the past, they'd start at the bottom, with the number runners and the stick handlers at the Barbut games. The investigation was based on the theory of carpenter ants—if you didn't eliminate all of them, even the smallest ones, they would simply multiply again. "We set forth right in the beginning that we were not going to stop until we got to the nest," says Kroner, "and if it meant having to work deals with people we had lots of evidence against, that's what we were going to do if it would lead us up the chain."

One of the first people they persuaded to cooperate was a local bookie named Michael Sabella, who worked in the markets and always smelled of fish. After being questioned by the feds on another matter, he agreed to wear a wire around the county's gambling dens. Eventually, he gave them enough evidence to get wiretaps on several low-level members of Strollo's sprawling enterprise, who, in turn, gave them enough evidence to tap more phones, and so on. As the number of intercepted conversations mushroomed into the thousands, Kroner and his partners, John Stoll and Gordon Klau, spent days sifting through transcripts.

But, after more than a year of sleepless nights, they still hadn't penetrated the Mafia's innermost circle. Hoping to "shake the tree," as Kroner put it, they started raiding gambling joints, which finally gave them enough evidence to install bugs in Strollo's kitchen and telephones. They began picking up snippets of incriminating conversations. They heard what sounded like a plot to shake down a priest and what some "asshole did before . . . he got whacked."

At one point early in their investigation, Kroner got a tip from an informant that Strollo was going to kill one of his rivals, Ernie Biondillo. Feeling a moral obligation to warn Biondillo, he picked up the phone and called him. "This is Bob Kroner," he said. "You know who I am?"

"Yeah, I know who you are."

"Well, I need to sit down and talk to you alone."

They met that night in a parking lot. Kroner hoped the warning would encourage Biondillo to cooperate with the investigation. But Biondillo just kept saying, *Who the fuck wants to kill me?*

Kroner studied him hard. "I can't tell you that. I'm not out here to start a war."

Unable to get an answer, Biondillo drove off in his Cadillac. Several months later, as Biondillo turned down a deserted street, two cars boxed him in, and two men wearing rubber masks opened fire. By the time Kroner got to the hospital, Biondillo was already dead.

Though Kroner was sure the hit was ordered by Strollo, the FBI still didn't have enough evidence to arrest him. But, by the summer of 1996, the authorities were finally starting to close in, and Strollo, sensing it, became more and more paranoid. On the phone, he began speaking almost exclusively in code and, suspecting Kroner was listening in, would say, "Bob, can you hear me? Can you hear me?" Once, upon meeting one of his oldest and most trusted confidants, Strollo had a sudden premonition that the friend was wearing a wire. Another time he decided a plane was following one of his bookies. When someone tried to calm him down, he snapped: "This is my life you're talking about . . . I got to fight for survival."

STROLLO GREW OBSESSED with Kroner. He sent one of his men to find out if the FBI agent's father, an old-fashioned city cop, could be paid off to control his renegade son. But word came back that the father was honest, like his kid. Knowing the FBI was tapping him, Strollo began to plant evidence against his nemesis to suggest Kroner was on the take. He told associates, almost nonchalantly, that Kroner had received bribes from "Little Joey" and was running drugs through the valley.

Then one day Kroner's partner heard Strollo grow more and more menacing. "I don't know what I'm going to have

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to do about these guys," he said, referring to the FBI agents. Not long afterward, unbeknownst to the FBI, Strollo ordered the hit on Gains, the county prosecutor who, the Mafia believed, was about to hire Kroner as his chief investigator.

But the bungled hit, of course, only created a bigger problem: In spring 1997, Gains received the phone call fingering the hapless assassins. On the basis of information from the caller—"the scorned woman," as Kroner gratefully called her—Bernie the Jew, Riddle, and Harris were all charged with attempted murder. One day, as Batcho was leaving his house with a friend to go to Jay's Hot Dogs, an unmarked car pulled up behind him. "Are you Mark Batcho?" two men said, jumping out of their car. "No, I'm not Mark Batcho. I don't know him," Batcho replied. But, in spite of his protestations, they took him into custody, where he eventually became, as he put it, "the lowest form of life there [is]—a mob rat."

On a cold morning just before Christmas 1997, dozens of FBI agents fanned out through the valley, arresting more than 28 other mob associates. When Kroner showed up at Strollo's door with an arrest warrant, Strollo said, "Are you happy now, Bob?"

In the end, nearly all of Strollo's underlings pleaded guilty and turned evidence against one another, except for Bernie the Jew and Riddle, the two men who had adopted the old Sicilian code even though they could never be officially inducted. "The only ones who had any balls were a *shvartsa* and a shine," said one of the lawyers familiar with the case.

Bernie insisted there was nothing to worry about: Strollo would never turn on them and break his oath of silence. But just before the trial, even as Bernie was speaking, Strollo's lawyer was leading his client upstairs, where he cut his final deal with the prosecution and told Kroner, "You win."

THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS surely one of the strangest moments in C-SPAN's history: "I will probably be under indictment" in the next few months, Traficant says, staring into the camera. It is March 2000, almost 20 years since his last arrest. The congressman has put on a somber black coat and tie for the occasion, but his hair is slightly tousled and his trademark long sideburns make him look like an aging biker. In his 16 years in Congress, Traficant has earned a reputation as a fiery, eccentric populist who often appears on the House floor, in polyester suits, to champion the working class and rail against the IRS. In a city without memory he has become known simply as "the honorable gentleman from Ohio," an almost cultish figure who sleeps in his office to save money and closes his speeches with the line "Beam me up, Mr. Speaker."

But today he looks as if he hasn't slept in weeks, and he says he's scared to death. "Hawks are circling, buzzards [are] circling, sharks [are] circling ... trying to kill the Traficant election," he stammers. He pauses, his cheeks flushed. "Let me tell you what: Twenty years ago—not quite—I was the only American in the history of the United States to defeat the Justice Department.... They have targeted me ever since." Suddenly he points his finger into the camera: "I'm targeting *them*. They better not make a damn mistake ... I am mad and ... I'm going to fight like a junkyard dog in the face of a hurricane, and ... if I beat them you're now watching one of the richest men in America, because I'm going to sue their assets all apart."

Even stranger than his warnings to the Justice Department and the FBI—and his admonition that he'll shoot any unexpected late-night visitors to his house—are Traficant's threats to his own party. He warns that if Democratic leaders don't stand by him, he'll switch parties—a critical defection that could undermine the Democrats' chances of regaining a House majority this fall. And, as further compensation for his loyalty, Traficant demands a list of favors for his district: "I want an empowerment zone from the president of the United States—and I expect it this year—and I want additional appropriations...." On national television, he seems to be extorting his own party.

Traficant doesn't say what the indictment will be for; nor will the FBI. But his C-SPAN announcement comes on the heels of a six-year investigation into organized crime in the Mahoning Valley that has already led to convictions against Traficant's former aide O'Nesti, a disbarred attorney who had advised him for several years, and a former deputy in his sheriff's office. According to news accounts first detailed in the Youngstown *Vindicator* and the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, investigators are looking into, among other things, whether the congressman received illegal contributions—including the use of a Corvette—from associates in the valley. They have recently homed in on two brothers, Robert T. and Anthony R. Bucci, who own a paving company in Traficant's district and allegedly delivered materials and did construction work on the congressman's 76-acre farm. Both brothers appear deeply enmeshed in the city's network of corruption. On one of the FBI's wiretaps, O'Nesti conspires with Strollo to steer a million-dollar contract to the Buccis' company. Robert Bucci has since apparently fled the country after allegedly transferring millions of dollars to an offshore account on the Cayman Islands.

Through it all, Traficant has steadfastly maintained his innocence, and the valley is bracing for a second showdown. "Here's what I'm saying now," he insists grimly on C-SPAN, "and I'm saying this to the Justice Department in Cleveland, Ohio.... If you are to indict me, indict me in June so I can be tried over the August recess, [because] I don't want to miss any votes."

WHEN I ARRIVE in Youngstown on a recent, cold spring morning, there is an odd sense of déjà vu, as if the old tapes have been rewound and played again. As Traficant campaigns for a ninth term in Congress, he once again faces the old accusations: bagmen, illicit favors, payoffs. I head downtown, trying to find someone to ask about the allegations, but the city is bizarrely empty, as if people had been called away on a last-minute errand and never came back. Finally, after rows and rows of boarded-up stores and deserted sidewalks, I see a light in one of the shops. In the window, Italian suits hang with handkerchiefs in the pockets. An old man is folding clothes by the cash register. When I ask him about Traficant,

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he stiffens. "Ain't no one gonna get rid of Traficant," he says. "Traficant's too sharp." Far from being angry about the city's history of corruption, he seems almost proud of it. He recalls fondly the "henchmen," including Strollo, who bought their suits from him. "They didn't wear red or pink [ones] like they're coming out with now," he says. When I press him about the local corruption, he shrugs. "Who cares? If you're working and making a living and nobody is bothering you, why are you going to butt in?"

Later, at my hotel, several elderly men are sitting around a table arguing about Traficant. "Traficant produces," says one. "That's what counts." "Damn right!" says another. They are all in their seventies and eighties and have lived in the valley for decades.

"When I was eight years old," one of them says suddenly to me, as if to make a special point, "I delivered newspapers downtown, and I would always go by this speakeasy on Sunday afternoon. Well, one day the owner says, 'I want you to meet someone.' So I went over and it was Al Capone." He pauses, shaking his head in awe. "*Al Capone.*"

"You see this," another man says, referring to the last speaker. "This is typical Youngstown. Here's an educated man, an attorney, and Traficant is a god of his, and he's still raving about meeting Al Capone."

When I stop at Youngstown State University to talk to Mark Shutes, an anthropologist and one of the only academics who studies the region, the first thing he says is, "You're not gonna write some crap about how we're all victims of gangsters, are you?" Shutes contends that, after so many years of eroded civic institutions, the community has come to rely increasingly on mobsters, who play the same role in civic life that the police and the political establishment do in other cities. "We have socialized ourselves and our offspring that this is the way the world is," he says. "This is our little safe part, with our community and church, but in order for it to be safe, you need these people to be brokers." Indeed, in a world where corruption is normal, he says, values prized in other cities are, in the valley, deemed counterproductive. "We don't see high ideals as being a benefit," he explains. "We see [them] as being a weakness. There is no sense in this community in which gangsters are people who have imposed their will on our community. Their values are our values."

SO MUCH SO that, despite two opponents railing against his alleged mob ties and an FBI investigation reportedly closing in on him, Traficant won the March 7 Democratic primary with more votes than his two main competitors combined. Traficant seems so unbeatable in November that some congressional Republicans have decided to defend him, apparently hoping he'll follow through on his threat to switch parties and cement their fragile majority. "Jimmy Traficant is not being done right by," Republican Representative Steve LaTourette of Ohio told the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*. "There isn't a finer man, there isn't a finer member of Congress, there isn't a finer human being ... than Jim Traficant. God bless you, Jimmy Traficant, and I hope to serve with you for many years."

Emboldened by his popular support, Traficant is doing what he's long done so well: rallying the valley against the outsiders trying to besmirch its name. Over the last year, he has defiantly called his convicted former top aide, O'Nesti, a "good friend" and championed a local sheriff convicted of racketeering, arguing that he should be moved to a prison closer to Youngstown to be near his ill mother. "[T]hese sons of bachelors will not intimidate me," he likes to say of the FBI, "and they won't jack me around."

Though he has retreated from reporters—"I'll only make an official statement when I'm actually killed," he says—the press releases have begun to pour out of his Washington office: "TRAFICANT BILL WOULD CREATE NEW AGENCY TO INVESTIGATE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT"; "TRAFICANT WANTS PRESIDENT TO INVESTIGATE FEDERAL AGENTS IN YOUNGSTOWN." On the House floor, where his speech is protected against suits for libel, he is bolder still: "Mr. Speaker, I have evidence that certain FBI agents in Youngstown, Ohio, have violated the RICO statute and ... stole large sums of cash.... What is even worse, they 'suggested' to one of their field operative informants that he should commit murder. Mr. Speaker, *murder*."

AT FBI HEADQUARTERS in Boardman, Kroner and his boss, Andy Arena, are trying to fend off Traficant's allegations. They are careful not to say anything about the press releases, the pending investigation of the congressman, or even the 1983 trial. But it is clear they are under siege. On talk radio, Traficant supporters denounce Kroner as a thief, a con man, a crook, a creep, a liar, and a dope dealer. "The thing that most depressed me," says Kroner, "was when I became the subject on talk radio one day and they were discussing my integrity." He folds his arms. "I just have to block out [those] things." Rather than a hero, he has become almost a pariah. "Everything is turned upside down here," says Arena.

As Kroner sits in his neatly pressed jacket and loafers, his 20-year-anniversary FBI medallion mounted prominently on a thick gold ring, he seems slightly defensive. "Every time we charge another public official, the [media] presents it as another black eye for the community," he says. "I'd prefer if they'd portray it to the community as another step in cleansing ourselves. We've got to take a look at what's being done here as a positive thing."

It is dusk by the time he shows me around the valley, and we rush past the old steel mills, past the Greek Coffee House and the Doll House and all the other gambling dens, past the place where Bernie the Jew met with his team of hit men and where Strollo had Ernie Biondillo whacked in broad daylight. "We're a part of this community like everyone else," Kroner says at one point. "We suffer the same problems if we live in a corrupt town." He pauses for a moment, perhaps because he can't think of anything to say or perhaps because he's not able to talk about the expected Traficant indictment or perhaps because he realizes that, after 25 years in the Mahoning Valley, he's done all he can do. "As long as they choose to put people in office who are corrupt," he says, "nothing will ever change." ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Well, Not Completely Lost

WILLIAM HAZLITT dismissed it: "If we were to part with any of the author's comedies, it should be this." But Harold Bloom has said: "I take more unmixed pleasure from this play than from any other Shakespearean play." Kenneth Branagh, if he had read this, might not agree entirely with Bloom but would certainly side with him against Hazlitt. He'd especially agree with a further Bloom comment on one of the characters: "The essence of Berowne is in that insouciant line uttered upon meeting a French lady-in-waiting in Navarre: 'Did not I dance with you in Brabant once?'"

Dance! Lightning could have flashed in Branagh's head from Bloom's line to a way of performing Berowne to the concept of transforming the whole play into a "dance" film. The play, of course, is **Love's Labour's Lost**, and it is now a Miramax musical-comedy film with Branagh as adapter and as director and as Berowne. The project was a promising possibility, not an instant sacrilege. The trouble is that the promise was not well-kept.

The plot of the play, cunningly symmetrical, is so artificial—like some eighteenth-century operas (*Così fan tutte* for prime instance)—that the artificiality is part of the fun. The young King of Navarre decides to spend three years in isolated study and thought, with no women allowed into his life, and he enlists three of his courtiers, chief among them the ebullient Berowne, to immure themselves with him. When the Princess of France arrives to visit the King, she and her three ladies-in-waiting become a threat to his and his courtiers' isolation. The pastry-chef architecture of the play invites music. Surprisingly, only one operatic version has been attempted: Nicolas Nabokov composed it in 1973, with a libretto by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman. But of musical-comedy versions, even with *Kiss Me, Kate* as precedent, nix. (Note, however, W. S. Gilbert's relevance. He didn't use Shakespeare, but he reversed the play's idea and made the men invade the women's isolation in *Princess Ida*.)

Branagh saw it as "a romantic musical comedy," and he solved the problem of the score with what must now be called the Woody Allen device, after *Everyone Says I Love You*. Branagh used old favorites, songs by Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, and more. All of them are irresistible, and they are not anachronistic because he set the film in 1939. He commissioned Patrick Doyle, who did all his previous Shakespeare music, to supply horn-rich interludes, which are like flowing gold between scenes.

The lovely songs warm us up, but they are not exactly the equivalent of Shakespeare's language—some of his most savory and delightful writing is in this play—at least two-thirds of which has been discarded. If Branagh was going to cut most of the lines to make room for the musical numbers, the numbers had to compensate us. They don't. The deficit arises less through the loss of the language, granted the idea of the project, than through two blatant producing mistakes. First, much of the casting is dull or dreadful, most notably the two leads, Alessandro Nivola as the King and Alicia Silverstone as the Princess. They are inadequate in every way. None of the principal eight is impressive except Branagh. Further, he has cast a member of the King's court with an actor who looks a good deal like the King. Unhelpful. (There is one subtle touch in the casting: the King has one black courtier in his ensemble, the Princess has one black lady-in-waiting. We expect that they are intended for each other; but they aren't.)

Second, actors who are not singers and dancers are asked to do a great deal of singing and dancing. Some of the singing may have been dubbed, but it is still uncompelling. Timothy Spaull, for instance, the burly man who was so winning in Mike Leigh films, plays Don Armado, the Spanish poseur, and is assigned a Cole Porter song: he merely struggles to bring it into Shakespeare. (Odd, when we remember that it was Porter who kissed our Kate.) The dancing is worse. There wouldn't have been any point in improving the trite choreography; these people can just about do what they were given. What is the point in asking an audience to watch long dance numbers executed by people who are not, so far as we can see, dancers? When Peter O'Toole, as a loony lord, burst into song and dance in *The Ruling Class*, along with some of his townspeople, it was a bracing fracture of realism, and the pleasure was increased because none of these people were expected to be performers in the singing-dancing sense. But Branagh's actors are the cast of a musical comedy—that's what they are there for—and most of them just can't cut the mustard.

A few exceptions. Geraldine McEwan who once captivated New York as Lady Teazle (in 1963) and who was Alice, the French lady-in-waiting, in Branagh's *Henry V*, here plays the schoolmistress Holofornia (Shakespeare's Holofornes transgendered) with her imperishable wit and charm. It is a treat to see McEwan tapping away and waving her arms as a member of the group backing up Nathan Lane in "There's No Business Like Show Business."

And there's Lane. He has become so smirkily ubiquitous on small and large screens that we are tempted to dislike his self-adoration. But there's no doubting that, as Costard the clown, he fulfills the Elizabethan requisite. Many of Shakespeare's clowns were written, it seems safe to say, for specific performers who could be trusted to make them funny. The roles were not intended for straight actors, however good, who were not intrinsically comic. (Remember Michael Keaton's near hernia trying to be funny as Dogberry in *Much Ado about Nothing*.) Lane *is* funny. That's what he starts from. Then he acts.

As for Branagh the Shakespearean, there is as yet no need to despair. A few weeks ago, after the death of John Gielgud, I cited Branagh as one hope for modern yet attuned Shakespearean acting. I still think so. In the patch that is left of Berowne's lines, he shows that he understands exactly what he is doing in Shakespeare and can do it with assurance. (Mark, however, that he and all the others pronounce "can't" and "dance" in American style. Is this a bow to Yankee globalization?)

Stanley Donen, the long-retired master director of musical films, is listed as a "presenter" of this picture. Perhaps it is the Donen presence that tickled Branagh

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into digging up some old Hollywood musical touches: a swimming-pool ballet with a bunch of pretty girls; the Fred Astaire chair-tipping (while dancing, Branagh steps onto a chair, puts the other foot on the back of the chair, and tips it backward as part of the dance); the sky hooks that lift the King and his three courtiers during a number.

Shakespeare's finish for the play is a refreshing conceit. The four men and the four women do not clinch and marry for a fade-out. Their unions are postponed for a year, mostly to test their loves. Berowne says of this conclusion:

> Our wooing doth not end like an old play;
> Jack hath not Jill.

Branagh evidently felt that Shakespeare's year of probation would be a tepid fade-out for a film, yet he didn't want to lose the unconventionality of Jack not yet getting Jill. So he throws in clips of the Second World War, in black and white, with some of the characters in some of the clips. Presumably this is why he set the film in 1939—so that he could "use" the Second World War as the cause of the delay in the four marriages. It's a somewhat grotesque choice for the finale of a spun-sugar musical.

The cheeriest point to make about *Love's Labour's Lost* is that, spotty though it is (the spots are the good moments), it is not a complete collapse in Branagh's career. It doesn't signal decline, it displays mistakes—lots of them. The old Branagh has the talent and plenty of time to recover. If he wants to. ■

The Saint Johann Sebastian Passion

By JOHN BUTT

Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician by Christoph Wolff

(Norton, 599 pp., $37.95)

I.

IT IS DIFFICULT to imagine a scholar more appropriate than Christoph Wolff to write a definitive biography of Bach on the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the great composer's death. As a German musicologist who has resided for many years in the United States, the world's most luxurious and fertile environment for musicology, Wolff has a winning combination of cultural background and experience. And he has a knack for hitting the Bach headlines just at the right time: in 1985, which marked the celebration of the composer's three-hundredth birthday, he discovered the early "Neumeister Chorales" at Yale, and in 1999 he uncovered, in Kiev, Ukraine, what is undoubtedly the greatest haul of lost manuscripts from the Bach family since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

But Wolff is certainly no sensationalist. All these discoveries were the fruits of decades of digging for lost Bach manuscripts—including a tantalizing encounter with a descendant of Bach in America, who is reputed to have told him that "I can't remember what I did with all those manuscripts." Moreover, as joint editor of the *Bach-Jahrbuch*, the foremost journal of Bach research, and as editor of the latest edition of the most complete collection of Bach documents in English, Wolff has all the equipment that one could possibly desire in a biographer.

Wolff's writing is generally engaging, even if it is sometimes surprisingly colloquial, its Germanic formality combining with American slang in an awkward but charming way. Thus Bach's was "the best show in town"; he gained "celebrity status"; he "followed his father's example by maintaining a special relationship with the folks on the Main"; he might "have gotten an earful about the quarreling dukes in Weimar"; and so on. Just as Luther managed to portray figures such as Moses and Jesus in his vernacular Bible as if they were German, Wolff gives us an American Bach whose Arnstadt tenure was his "thirteen hundred days," who lapsed into "lame duck" status at Weimar, and whose career was propelled by the activities of various "search committees."

A closer reading of this important book shows that Wolff is not donning his Harvard baseball cap merely to court a wider audience. It is clear that he passionately believes that Bach had values and concerns very much like our own; that he was just like the best of us as a human being, and thus left us with artworks that are incomparably pertinent to our contemporary needs. Rather than engaging in the cultural debates that so vitalize—or, depending on your view, so enervate—the American academy, Wolff assumes, splendidly and unapologetically, that Bach is central to modern civilization. He writes a story that renders even the most obscure Thuringian parochialism familiar and useful. And to this he adds the bold assertion that Bach was a musical Newton whose discoveries are just as relevant today as they were at the time. (He is right, of course, that at least for everyday earthly motion Newton still takes beating.)

WHATEVER ONE'S REACTIONS to Wolff's idolatry of his subject, nobody will be disappointed with the sheer detail and the comprehensiveness of his book, which is undoubtedly the most important Bach biography since Philipp Spitta's life written over a century ago. Provided with the most up-to-date knowledge of the Bach family and the environments of Thuringia and Saxony, we get to know Bach and his world as we have never known them before. Thus we read of the enlightened educational policy in Bach's hometown, which made school attendance mandatory for all boys and girls between five and twelve; and we learn countless details about the Bach family network of musicians who mutually supported one another. (Many seem to have had startlingly similar names; but the very confusion of names gives the story an aura of

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authenticity, a realistic biographical texture such as one might get from reading a great Russian novel.)

There are details for everyone: all you would want to know about the organists of Arnstadt and their duties, and more than you might reasonably expect to know about the armchairs in the Weimar court chapel, together with the color of the choristers' benches. Some details even help us to infer missing information: the paper deliveries to Bach between 1714 and 1717 are such that—at least by Wolff's calculations—only twenty percent, at most, of the performing materials that he prepared in Weimar have survived. Wolff never misses an opportunity to stress Bach's sociability, if the data allow the slightest inference: we learn that Bach purchased 264 quarts of wine at his second marriage, and that he possessed an unusual amount of silverware, coffeepots, teapots, tobacco implements, and bottles of brandy.

Those with specific musicological questions will not be disappointed, either. There is much recent information about Bach's earliest and latest manuscripts, such as the discovery by Peter Wollny (a brilliant former student of Wolff's) of an early version of the Credo from the *Mass in B Minor*, and Hans-Joachim Schulze's good guess as to the librettist of the Leipzig Chorale cantatas. The information on rehearsal schedules and the detailed layout of the St. Thomas School in Leipzig are also indispensable.

What makes Wolff's book so convincing as a story is that he turns his back on the so-called positivist tradition in Bach scholarship of the last three or four decades, according to which only what is reliably documented can be stated, and we must limp from document to document in tracing the composer's footsteps. Wolff is very learned, and therefore freer. His narrative renders Bach's story more poetically than it has been rendered in recent years. Perhaps the most moving moment comes when the composer returns from Carlsbad to find his wife dead and buried. "Who would have greeted him first with the shocking news?" Wolff writes. "Whether it was one of the children or Friedelena, their mother's older sister, who had lived in the household for more than a decade, the family's grief was immeasurable and enduring."

Wolff is supremely qualified to attempt to fill in the gaps in the surviving documentation. We learn, for example, that Bach might have met his brother's teacher Pachelbel at a wedding in 1694, and what music might have been performed. Most creative of all, perhaps, is Wolff's explanation of what Bach had been doing when he fell into a fight with the bassoonist Geyersbach in 1706: since he was wearing a sword, he was probably coming from an official musical engagement at the court, which in turn suggests a much wider range of musical activities for Bach in Arnstadt than has normally been supposed. Most biographies tend to stress

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Johann Gotfried Walther, engraving from "Musikalisches Lexicon," 1732

the provinciality of Bach's early domiciles. After leaving Eisenach, his birthplace, upon the death of his parents, the ten-year-old Bach moved to his brother's house in one-horse Ohrdruf; and much of the first half of his career was spent in towns that were not much bigger. Only Leipzig, to which he moved in 1723, was a substantial town with a place on the international map.

But sometimes Wolff the careful scholar steps in to correct Wolff the novelist, as when he remarks that "we cannot ascertain what Bach's actual musical functions were" in Lüneburg, while just two pages before we were told that Bach had taken on "assignments as vocal soloist." And sometimes it is difficult to understand why Wolff allows one speculation but not another: it seems "unrealistic" that the sixteen-year-old Bach roamed through the Lüneburg library, but it is fine to assume that he had "at his disposal" all the school's keyboard instruments and even probably helped overhaul the organs. Bach probably did not meet Antonio Lotti (the court Capellmeister whom the electoral prince had recently acquired from Italy) during his visit to Dresden in 1717 because C.P.E. Bach would have otherwise said so, yet he probably met the violinist Johann Georg Pisendel and the theorist and Vice-Capellmeister Johann David Heinichen at this time (on which Emanuel Bach is equally silent).

Still, most of Wolff's speculations, and those he borrows from other recent writers, seem well judged, and they will give serious students of Bach pause for thought: that the fifth Brandenburg Concerto, with its virtuoso harpsichord cadenza, may have originated with Bach's visit to Dresden in 1717, responding to the challenge from the French musician Louis Marchand (this speculation Wolff borrows from Pieter Dirksen); that Bach's activity on *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, the *Inventions*, the *Sinfonias*, and the *Orgelbüchlein*, all of which he copied afresh or appended new title pages to, may have been directly connected with his application to the Leipzig cantorate in 1722–1723; that some of Bach's extremely complex motets (usually assumed to have been associated with funerals) may have been written specifically to exercise the choral forces, since this is precisely what Bach's successors in Leipzig did later in the century. Moreover, the great *Prelude and Fugue in B minor* for organ, BWV 544, might well have been prepared for the memorial service for the Saxon-Polish queen in 1727 (when Bach is known to have performed his *Trauerode*).

Some of Wolff's speculations are perhaps more far-fetched. Is it really likely that such a venerable academic figure as Johann Abraham Birnbaum participated in Bach's Collegium Musicum, or Louise Adelgunde Gottsched, the wife of the poet and literary theorist, who once made a banal and amateurish remark about the difficulty of Bach's keyboard partitas? The Collegium, after all, was well known for its

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professional standards, playing an important part in the establishment of the public concert tradition in Leipzig. But one of Wolff's scenarios is extremely plausible, and sheds considerable light on Bach's last year—namely, that Bach re-performed *The Contest between Phoebus and Pan*, Cantata 201, a work that allegorizes the aesthetic battle between high and low styles of music and clearly reveals Bach's preference for the former—in direct response to a recent dispute over the value of music in education, and also to demonstrate his deep hurt in the wake of the city council's audition of his successor while he was still alive and kicking.

WOLFF DOES MUCH to give us a picture of Bach's musical personality that breathes new life into several existing theories and also provides some new insights. We come to understand more deeply Bach's achievement in integrating many aspects of musical practice—thoroughbass, harmony, and counterpoint, and the twin arts of performance and composition—as they had never been integrated before. Most musicians in his environment would have learned only what they needed for the job at hand, such as performance or the simple harmonization of existing melodies; and academics who studied counterpoint were often not prolific composers or expert performers. But Bach was a composer who knew how to imitate "classics," and how to rewrite and to "improve" his own and others' music to a degree quite unparalleled at the time (his ambitious reworkings of Johann Adam Reinken are the most obvious examples of his turning relatively simple sonatas into quite complex pieces). And most profoundly of all, much of Bach's music succeeds through its tantalizing balance of simplicity and complexity. One often senses that Bach has realized each piece to its fullest potential without adding a note that is superfluous. Indeed, a piece often owes its complexity to the consistent application of a single, relatively simple device, such as the close imitation, or *stretto*, that characterizes the first fugue from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

Wolff attends also to the religious dimension of Bach's art. He infers—quite rightly, in my opinion—that Bach saw the actual sound of music as bringing about the presence of God's grace. In the fifth chapter of 2 Chronicles, where the presence of God is manifest in a cloud during the performance of the musicians at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, Bach writes in his Calov Bible (a Bible that was printed with a commentary largely abstracted from Luther's own writings): "NB. With devotional music, God is always present in His grace." Also rightly, Wolff relates Bach's compositional attitude to some of the metaphysical theories of his age, and goes so far as to propose that Bach's entire output, in seeking to reach all that was possible in art, may actually have constituted an argument for the existence of God.

Wolff strikingly asserts that Bach's dramatic sense has been seriously undervalued in the past, and that many works show an uncanny mastery of dramatic practice and pacing. Indeed, he could have pushed further his valuable observation that Bach's dramatic music is infinitely more complex than the opera of his day. As a dramatist, Bach surely belongs more in the company of Mozart, Wagner, and Verdi than that of Hasse or even Handel. By the standards of his time, certainly, the *St. Matthew Passion* is simply too suffused with multiple meanings and temporal disjunctions to qualify as good drama; and it has come to be appreciated as such only with the hindsight of a far more sophisticated conception of opera and drama.

II.

IN ALL, THEN, Wolff provides us with a tremendous wealth of detail and interpretation that will be fundamental to our understanding of Bach for many years to come. But is this the last word in Bach biography? Is the picture of Bach essentially complete, given that few new "facts" are likely to emerge? What is so striking in the light of Wolff's interpretation is the extent to which the facts do not speak for themselves, and that one person's reading of the available documentation can differ considerably from another's. And Wolff's own reading of the Bach documents is itself colored by an ideology—a profoundly reactionary one, in the field of Bach scholarship and in the general criticism of the arts.

Wolff allows virtually no criticism of Bach's musical output. His analyses and descriptions of the music seem to assume that all of it is, by definition, of the highest quality. His worshipful enthusiasm for Bach places him in the Romantic tradition of Bach criticism stretching from Johann Nicolaus Forkel (who was arguably the first professional musicologist) to Philipp Spitta. Indeed, in the final words of his book, Wolff adduces Forkel's ringing pronouncement that Bach's works will forever remain "true ideals and imperishable models of art." While treating the composer with similar reverence, however, Wolff's nineteenth-century predecessors did not hesitate to make critical judgments, and allowed that some works are of lesser value. Given that Forkel went so evidently awry in his undervaluing of Bach's vocal output, for instance, it may well be that Wolff is wary of committing a similar blunder, and assumes that all are great for safety's sake.

The lack of a critical voice—as if anything less than reverence would be blasphemy—does dilute the historiographical rigor of Wolff's discussion, and it renders the musical aspects of the discussion considerably blander than they might have been. And Wolff's assumption that all of Bach's compositions are (or might one day be proved to be) necessarily great seems to segue into another assumption about Bach: that the man who made this great music must himself have been great. Wolff's Bach is an unqualified hero.

AT EVERY TURN Wolff goes out of his way to idealize Bach, "the complete, the learned, the perfect musician." As he writes in one of his swooning moments: "Somehow, what looks to us like a totally unmanageable workload left room not only for an unrivaled creative output, but also for such matters as procuring a singing bird and carnations for the lady of the house." When the teenaged Bach moved to Lüneburg, it was "surely of his own free will," thus demonstrating "an astonishing degree of independence and confidence." On deciding to leave Mühlhausen after barely a year in the post, Bach "acted most responsibly by seeing to a smooth and orderly transition." While most biographers would describe Bach's insistence on maintaining the cantor's traditional rights to the "Old Service" at St. Paul's in Leipzig as part of his struggle against an erosion in status and his desire to collect every scrap of income that could come his way, Wolff describes Bach's attending of the service four times a year as "conscientious." If we had thought that Bach could be a rather difficult man, particularly in regard to the tedious school duties required of the cantor of the St. Thomas School, Wolff suggests that Bach's complaints about his treatment in Leipzig come from "a frustrated man who had never failed to do his best," who always held his Leipzig school offices in "the highest esteem."

Wolff considers even the stylistic diversity of Bach's four main composing sons to reflect not their desire to break away from what they saw as an outdated mold, but rather the fact that "none of them were trained to imitate his musical orientation," and so their individual voices confirm their "father's ideals of individuality." By the same reasoning, any composer after Bach who does not sound like Bach could be said to be inspired by the great master's "ideals of individuality." Many scholars in recent years have remarked on the comparative paucity of profound

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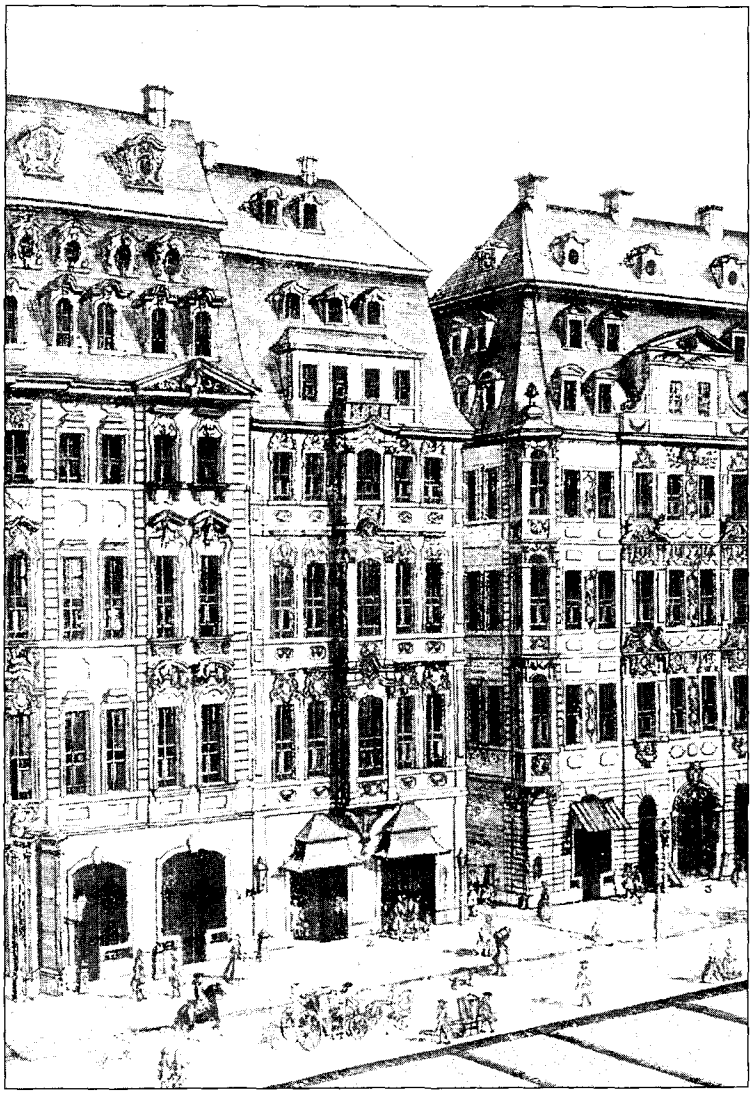
statements issuing from Bach's pen, but Wolff turns an absence into a presence and implies that the surviving handful of dull and clumsy letters cannot be representative of the far richer body of writing that Bach must (by definition, one is tempted to surmise) have produced. If he "did not engage much in personal correspondence, why did he use a private secretary between 1737 and 1742?" But surely the need for a private secretary could equally well reflect a reluctance to engage in much correspondence.

At every turn "the unmistakable qualities of Bach's music find their equivalent in his strong and highly individual artistic personality." Wolff's Bach is an all-American guy who is "an extremely self-conscious manager who looked out for his own interests and knew how to protect them"; who, running an instrument-rental and commission sales business, was an exemplary entrepreneur. Even in the depths of his Leipzig despair, Bach would have realized that, in contrast to the "unpredictable despotic rule" of royal employment, "civic government had its advantages and that he would encounter few problems in steering his own course." Bach's visit in 1747 to Frederick the Great in Potsdam, barely six months after Prussia had been at war with Saxony, must reflect the composer's role "as a true ambassador of peace," evidently holding his own with those in the pop and classical worlds today who gushingly spread peace and solidarity across the globe.

Yet the picture of Bach the man that generally emerges in recent scholarship paints a much darker and less certain picture. For many scholars, the paucity of Bach's writing, and the fact that Bach used a professional writer to defend himself when he was vehemently attacked in print, suggest that the cantor was not overly skilled in verbal expression. For each of the two or three profound statements that he added in the glosses in his Calov Bible, there are countless marginalia that relate to utterly tedious and trivial details.

Some writers, particularly Ulrich Siegele, have examined Bach's role in the very complicated political situation in Leipzig and Saxony, and have concluded that Bach seems often to have aligned himself with the royalist and absolutist camp. His statements about the organization of church music in Mühlhausen and Leipzig reveal an absolutist conception of hierarchy and order. (The expression "well-regulated church music," for instance, is derived from the concept of a standing army.) Moreover, given his frequent re-use of music written for royal celebrations for Christian worship, it is not unlikely that Bach saw the monarchist dispensation as a part of God's wider order.

And there is more to the unmodern, pre-Enlightened, non-liberal Bach. The recent research of David Yearsley has suggested that the intense study of counterpoint in the early eighteenth century often went hand in hand with an interest in alchemy and other occult arts. If there is no direct evidence that Bach participated in such discussions, many figures close to him (such as his distant cousin J.G. Walther) did. Of course, Wolff may well have good reason to disagree with all or some of these views; but the problem is that he does not deign to engage them. Indeed, he even ignores the work of Michael Marissen, which addresses the question of anti-Judaism in the Lutheranism of Bach's time, and paints a relatively favorable picture of the work in this regard.



Johann Georg Shreiber, engraving of Zimmermann's coffeehouse, principal site of Bach's Collegium Musicum, 1712

In Wolff's biography, the unedifying aspects of Bach may as well not exist. It would seem that, for Wolff, the discussion of these unheroic perspectives would distance us from the ideal modern Bach who emerges fully formed and perfect out of the music. Wolff almost admits as much in the closing sentence of his introduction: "because Bach's timeless and global impact is not revealed in the narrow confines of his life story, all the more does understanding the musical science that underlies his works allow us some insight into his intellectual biography."

Just as Bach's musical greatness appears to imply Bach's human greatness, Wolff sees every aspect of Bach's biography and environment in the most positive light possible. What is usually considered the political and cultural backwater of Thuringia is in Wolff's telling "an economically and culturally vigorous region." Bach's formative musical experiences were "almost unparalleled in their quality, variety, and extent." Normally considered one of the least well-traveled composers of the eighteenth century, Bach here is said to have eyed "a position in the free imperial city of Mühlhausen, [showing] a readiness to move again out of the traditional family realm." Bach's use of a *St. Mark Passion* from Hamburg "is evidence of his nonparochial outlook, not to mention well-functioning connections." His appointment in Leipzig "was not just local news," since the city was "Germany's intellectual capital" and "there was hardly a better place for him."

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Moreover, just as this new Bach enjoyed a stimulating life in all the prime spots of European culture, he was apparently far more appreciated in his lifetime than we have been led to believe. A newspaper report on a council service in 1731 refers to Bach's contribution as "artful" and "pleasant," to which Wolff adds: "however banal they may strike us today [these] are highly favorable judgments that far exceed what newspapers of the time generally wrote about a musical performance." Wolff similarly downplays virtually every controversy with which Bach's career is peppered. The Scheibe dispute of the 1730s, about Bach's aesthetic legitimacy and relevance as a composer, was "inconsequential" and a "tempest in a teapot"; and the famous anecdote about Bach's elder brother confiscating the forbidden copy of his music book "does not evidence jealousy."

Wolff downplays the very evident distaste for sophisticated music in Pietist Lutheranism, as he downplays the antagonism between Bach and the Leipzig town council. Indeed, the council was reluctant to offer the cantor more financial support in the 1730s because "to their ears, the performances went well.... They thought the cantor was doing very well, raising funds for his projects by selling text booklets ... and even enlarging his pool of musicians." The problem was thus not that they did not appreciate Bach; the problem was that they appreciated him almost too much.

AT EVERY TURN Wolff goes out of his way to portray Bach as "the learned musician," not just by stressing that his musical thought and his artistic imagination are equal to any in the Western world, but by suggesting also that Bach was an intellectual in exactly the same terms as his peers. There is the comparison with Newton; and while it is true that Bach's insights into the possibilities afforded by the musical styles and rules of his age may parallel Newton's insight into the "local" laws of motion, there is something uneasy about comparing an uncanny intuition into a human cultural practice with a major paradigm shift in empirical science. The notion that Bach and Newton "lived, thought, and worked in the same intellectual climate of scientific discovery and empirical testing of fundamental principles" is historically simplistic. Worse, it assumes a close analogy between the nature of art and the nature of science, without arguing for such a highly contestable assumption.

And Wolff's analogy does not stop there. There is also the suggestion that just as Newton's discoveries are valid and useful today, so Bach's musical science provides an equally "stable frame of reference" that no other composer provides. In this way Bach's extraordinary musical ideas and innovations are frozen into "true" and universal and immutable laws. Like a well-funded research scientist, Bach "had the advantage of his cutting-edge experimental background" in composing the *St. Matthew Passion*. Bach's development is to be seen as showing "technical and stylistic advances, continually setting new benchmarks." His achievements are finally to be regarded as part of that glorious Whiggish progress that presumably leads up to our more enlightened present.

Every aspect of Bach's education is taken to show his deep intellect. Wolff puts a brave face on Bach's mediocre school performance in Eisenach, and trumpets his better performance in Ohrdruf. The Lyceum in Ohrdurf was indeed a well-regarded educational establishment, and the intellectual dimension that he gained there may well have set him apart from the previous family tradition; but without a subsequent university education and a considerable body of literary or scientific writing, the evidence for Bach the intellectual is still elusive. And rather than seeing Bach's position of cantor in the St. Thomas School as an anomaly (as it was indeed regarded by the town council at the time), as the appointment of a superlative practical musician into an academic post that normally required university qualifications, Wolff assumes that Bach was respected as an academic and that he must have absorbed much from the broad academic atmosphere of school and university. Here, too, in what is becoming a familiar form of argumentation, the very absence of interesting books in the inventory of Bach's theological library must point to the fact that these would have been removed and distributed before the inventory was compiled. Similarly, Bach's apparent lack of interest in theory is—by a curious alchemy that I do not fully understand—transformed into evidence of his "true" learned and scientific status: "That Bach's music could engender theory without freezing into theory demonstrates the strength of its scientific underpinning."

What is perhaps most extraordinary is the type of evidence that Wolff cites for Bach's intellectual and scientific disposition. The composer's interest and experience in the art of organ-building, for example, is meant to place Bach in the category of "scientist." (Perhaps Wolff is thinking of the great American organ builder Charles B. Fisk, who began his career devising the detonators for the Manhattan project.) Wolff takes the fact

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that Bach studied books by Friedrich Erhard Niedt, Johann Joseph Fux, and Johann David Heinichen as evidence of a theoretical disposition. Again, things are not so simple. While the books by Fux and Heinichen are profound in the depth of their musical exemplification of the rules of counterpoint and figured bass respectively, all three are essentially practical treatises providing rules-of-thumb for the performer-composer, and hardly count as profound intellectual accomplishments in the wider sense. Nor were guides to composition considered theory by the standards of Bach's time; theory was meant to be much more abstract and scientific, kept well away from the mere sounding of tones. In Wolff's account, moreover, Bach's own adaptation of Niedt's idiosyncratic and largely unsystematic treatise on figured bass (or how to realize chords above a bass line) for his classes at the St. Thomas School is meant to show Bach as enhancing his stature in Leipzig as "a musical scholar"; but it is largely copied word for word, and even less theoretical than the original.

Wolff considers the profoundly archaic music theorist Andreas Werckmeister—who may have inspired Bach's interest in composing *The Well-Tempered Clavier*—to be symptomatic of "the general spirit of discovery spurred by the Scientific Revolution." In actuality, Werckmeister was more or less a throwback to Pythagoras who believed, in his *Musicalische Paradoxal-Discourse* of 1707, that changes in musical taste over a century or so resulted from the differing alignment of the heavenly bodies. And in what must be the most absurd moment in his book, Wolff compares the dispute as to whether it was Couperin or Bach who first thought of using the thumb as a principal finger in keyboard fingering to the dispute as to whether it was Newton or Leibniz who first invented calculus.

Wolff's conception of Bach comes surprisingly close to Schoenberg's notion of a great composer, working according to historical necessity and realizing an abstract, panhistorical Idea: "In the final analysis, only the idea can claim to be truly perfect, and Bach knew it." Schoenberg's notion of the composer became institutionalized in American universities during the 1950s, and so it is particularly striking to read about "Bach the scholar and prototype of a composition professor [who] conceived his music for the benefit of those who did not 'confuse important ideas with childish notions' and 'whose musical hearing is not spoiled by ... newfangled taste.'" Never mind that the notion of the composition professor at the top of the musical food-chain has come in for sustained and proper criticism over the last twenty years.

Although most people would agree that there are still fine composers around, inside or outside the academy, the idea that skill in composition is automatically evidence of an outstanding intellectual disposition (at least in the sense applied to a research scientist) is surely questionable. To be sure, there is creativity in science and there is intellection in art; but the similarities between the fields must not obscure the differences. It does none of these difficult and necessary disciplines any service to assume that they all come down to the same thing. Perhaps Wolff would like to argue otherwise, but then he needs to broach these issues. Instead he blithely ignores them.

What makes Wolff's significant book so disappointing in its intellectual impact is not the density of its erudition, but its effacement of any sense of difference between our world and Bach's world, between his music as it survives today and its original environment. Why does Bach's music still have relevance in a pluralistic, relativistic age? If it does indeed possess an element of universality, how can this be possible, and what are the parameters of discussion? Wolff maintains almost total silence just when one most ardently wishes him to speak.

Why must Bach have been ideal in every sense and dimension? Surely it is just as plausible, and in its way it is also profoundly edifying, to view Bach as creating his sublime music out of a provincial environment and a frustrating career, despite a rigid, reactionary, and sometimes difficult personality, and without a specifically intellectual or "enlightened" disposition. Surely there is a thrill not only in the story of Bach as a hero living in a wonderful age, but also in the story of genius shining through the stupefactions of quotidian existence and the generally unpromising circumstances of human affairs. That, too, is romance. ■

Survival of the Misfittest

By Lee Siegel

Blonde
by Joyce Carol Oates

(Ecco, 752 pp., $27.50)

I.

Marilyn, Marilyn, Marilyn.

Her sexual energy and her unconscious life lay on the surface, and just at the moment when the abstract expressionists were driving perspective up to the surface of their paintings. The color-draining iciness of her face made explicit a fact of female sexuality, and just around the time of the Kinsey Report. She became a great comic actress and undid her own alabaster myth, and just as the myth of white superiority was about to be dismantled by civil rights legislation. Her dark lashes and her dark eyes (though actually blue, they always look dark, even when her image appears in color) hint with a droll irony at another personality behind the sex, as if this very archetype of feminine sexuality were really a slapped-together fraud, and this just at the moment when a political consciousness was stirring among gay men. Her voluptuous posterior slowly amplifies her figure, especially when she is wearing white, almost like an inversion of the mushroom clouds of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as if in cherishing her, men and even women throughout the world could sublimate the horrors of recent history into sweet thoughts of love. And so on. And so on. And so on.

In other words, a question arises. Just how ridiculous is it to use Marilyn Monroe as the symbol of all things arousing or important, as an instrument for the interpretation of society, culture, politics, as people have been doing for nearly half a century? Is she really the world-historical figure into which our culture has promoted her? There is a Marilyn Monroe encyclopedia, just published. Now, too, in front of the HarperCollins building in New York, you can see a painted sculpture

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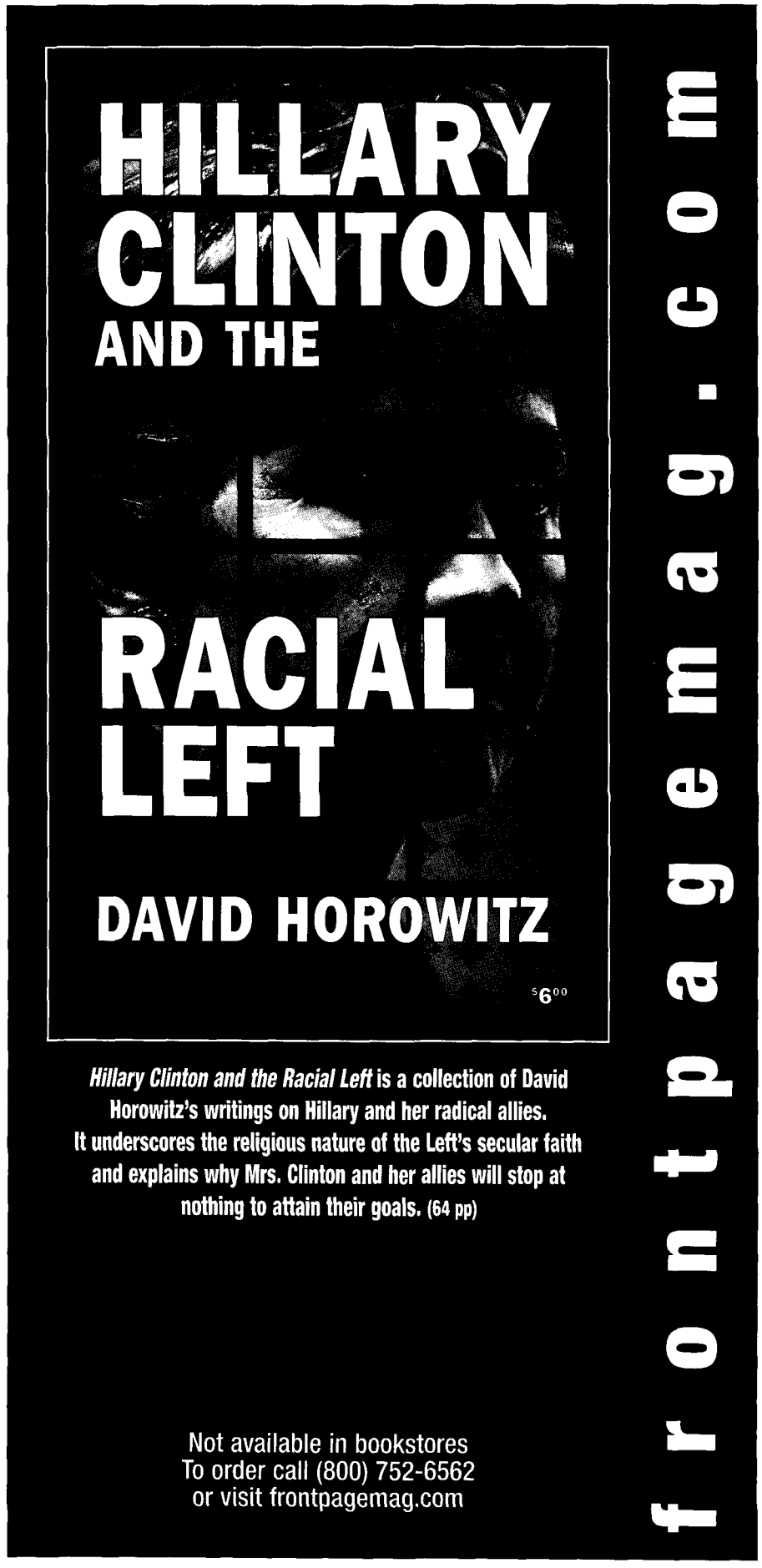
of Marilyn Monroe that depicts her standing over the subway grate with her skirts famously rising. The architectual critic Herbert Muschamp has compared Frank Gehry's Guggenheim museum in Bilbao to Monroe. The mills of Hollywood still seek out actresses who will reproduce her manner and her erotic atmosphere. Everyone with access to pen and paper seems to have had a literary shot at her; she is to certain modern writers what strangely raffish Madonnas were to certain Italian painters in the Renaissance.

Monroe brought out the raw essence of the people who wrote about her. Truman Capote transcribed a conversation with her, entitled "A Beautiful Child," using the occasion wearily to pretend that the most authentic kind of innocence is the most enviable kind of louche sophistication.

> Marilyn: Did I ever tell you about the time I saw Errol Flynn whip out his prick and play the piano with it?

After Monroe's death Diana Trilling wrote an essay about her, wise and compassionate, but at times a little too solemn in its regard for its subject, and a little too moist in its expression of popular sympathies: "How mean-spirited can we be, to have denied her whatever might have added to her confidence that she was really a solid person and not just an uninhabited body?" Trilling ended grandiosely, in transports of misplaced high criticism: "I think Marilyn Monroe was a tragedy of civilization, but this is something quite else again from, and even more poignant than, being a specifically American tragedy." Sartre thought her the greatest living actress. Norman Mailer discharged an overwrought and once-celebrated book about her. ("She was our angel, the sweet angel of sex, and the sugar of sex came up from her like a resonance of sound in the clearest grain of a violin.") Gloria Steinem replied with a dour book of her own. ("A student, lawyer, teacher, artist, mother, grandmother, defender of animals, rancher, homemaker, sportswoman, rescuer of children—all these are futures we can imagine for Norma Jeane.") And now Joyce Carol Oates has joined the company of lettered stargazers in a nearly 800-page fictionalized version of Monroe's life.

MONROE IS CERTAINLY the most famous movie star who ever lived, and her face has got to be the most reproduced visage in history since the work of art submitted to the age of mechanical reproduction. Though few people under forty seem to know much about her aside from her face and her aura, we cannot seem to get her out of our heads. She has achieved the equivalent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of beatification in contemporary America: she has become an "icon."

In America, there is no end to status. If the rank of celebrity was about as alpine as it gets in America, it is that no more. Celebrity has been outstripped by iconicity. Of Marilyn the icon, a single human lifetime would not suffice to track down all the evidence. According to *Adweek,* when Baldwin & Stone, an advertising company, created a marketing campaign for "a new line of high-end recessed light fixtures for upscale homes and offices," it hit on the concept of evolution and came up with "Evolution of an Icon," a three-pager portraying the obscure Norma Jeane Baker developing into "the pop-culture phenomenon." *Women's Wear Daily* attributes the jeans revival to "icons" such as Monroe. In a discussion of Monroe's brief marriage to Joe DiMaggio, *Sports Illustrated* speculates that "never had two bigger icons come together in marriage." (What a mess that must have made!) *Ladies Home Journal* describes Monroe as an "icon of sexuality combined with vulnerability." For *Psychology Today,* being an icon is just one quality among many qualities in a very busy existence: Monroe was "icon, actress, birthday serenader, model and immortal vixen."

Marilyn Monroe and Joyce Carol Oates
by Vint Lawrence for The New Republic

DISSOLVE, FOR A moment, to Byzantium. About 1,300 years ago, there was once a backlash against the fashioning of icons. Around the beginning of the eighth century, the so-called iconoclasts rebelled against what they believed to be the blasphemy of depicting Christ in human form. Since the fifth century, early Byzantine artists in the Orthodox Eastern church had created portraits of Christ to serve as aids to prayer and meditation. Hauntingly beautiful, the portraits attempted to capture the mystical dimension of divinity. But then the artists grew more ambitious—or less ambitious, depending on where you stand—and began to make their pictures increasingly realistic. They argued that "every image is declarative and indicative of something hidden . . . the image has been invented for the sake of guiding knowledge and manifesting publicly that which is concealed." For the iconoclasts, however, a visible Christ corrupted the divine nature. They believed that realism lay in the preservation of what was hidden: they railed against "the painter [who] fashions with his impure hands things that are believed by the heart and confessed by the mouth." The "realistic" portrayal of the incarnation of Christ, in their view, flattened an essence into a thing and sundered faith from the nurturing soil of imagination. They feared that earthly icons might create the aesthetic framework for a worldly skepticism.

It would appear that the function of icon-making really has not changed since the fifth century. In a swirling, fluid culture, "icons" are what pass for "guiding knowledge." When our pundits wish to sum up and to compress complicated dimensions of experience, they deploy the icon phrase, which has the effect of reassuring us that complicated dimensions of experience are not all that elusive or threatening. "Sexuality combined with vulnerability" is the poorly worded version of one of the deeper riddles of human nature; but an "icon of sexuality combined with vulnerability" is a cozy mental bromide with which to personalize neatly this riot of fortune, and also to wave it away from all our ordinariness, so that we may loosen reality's grip upon us and live vicariously, in an inflamed passivity, in which fascination is our most intense experience.

Yet if, for the iconoclasts, icons lost the divine in the imposition of the human, today's icons lose the human in a mocking simulation of divinity. Contemporary icon-making and celebrity-anointing pretend to affirm an originality of character and an individuality of accomplishment, but they are actually caricatures of the original and the individual. Iconitude and celebritude detach the famous personality from its actual attainments. They reflect democracy's deep ambivalence about the ideal of individual excellence, which is one thing as a public ideal, but quite another as a fact of life staring you in the face when you are trying so hard yourself to live up to the public imperative to be all you can be. Thus the downward motion of all this popular acclaim. (Betty Boop and the Three Stooges are also American icons.) Icons and celebrities are the embodiments of envy with the face of adoration. The subjects of icons are, in fact, always dead.

Icons are an assault upon their subjects. After all, they can be either people or things. For *Newsweek,* Monroe is an "American cultural icon," but so is McDonald's. For a journal called *World Trade,* football is an "American icon." For *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture and Media Studies,* convertibles were "an icon of America's aesthetic, economic technological, and cultural superiority over the Soviet Union." When Warhol famously reproduced Marilyn's face over and over again, implying that the woman had been turned into an object to be passed on through the marketplace, he was on to a truth about our public alchemies even as he was complicit with them. The essential operation behind today's icon-making is to construct an aesthetic framework for

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Arabian Fables (II)

More fanciful Arab myths to sway world opinion.

Earlier this year, we published our message, "Arabian Fables (I)", in which we made clear how the Arab propaganda machine creates myths and lies with which to misinform the world. We discussed the myths of the "Palestinians" and of the "West Bank" and the mythical concept of "occupied territories". In today's message, we shall address three more of these myths.

What are some of these myths?

Jerusalem ("Arab East Jerusalem"). The Arabs have assiduously propagated the myths that Jerusalem is an Arab capital, that (after Mecca and Medina) Jerusalem is their third holy city, and that it is intolerable to them that infidels (Jews) are in possession of it.

The reality of course is that Jerusalem was never an Arab capital and that it was, until the Jews revitalized it, a dusty provincial city that hardly played any economic, social, or political role. Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible and has been the center of the Jewish faith and the focus of Jewish longing ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple in the early years of the first millenium. Not once is Jerusalem mentioned in the Koran.

As to "East Jerusalem": There is East Saint Louis, there is East Hampton, and there used to be East Berlin, but, until the Arab propaganda machine created the concept, there was never in history an "East Jerusalem", let alone an "Arab East Jerusalem".

The eastern part of Jerusalem is now predominantly inhabited by Arabs, though their proportion is decreasing. But what is the reason for this? It is because the Jordanians destroyed all traces of Jewish presence from the eastern part of the city and drove all the Jews out during the 19 years (between 1948 and 1967) in which they were in occupation of the eastern part of the city. The world, informed by Arab propaganda, considers those Jews who wish to return to the eastern part of the city to be troublemakers or worse.

The concept of Jerusalem being a holy Arab city and the capital of whatever political entity the "Palestinians" may eventually form is a myth and so of course is the concept of "Arab East Jerusalem".

"Settlements". When Jordan came into possession of Judea/Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem, following the invasion of the newly-formed Jewish state, and stayed in occupation for 19 years, it systematically obliterated all Jewish villages in the area under their occupation, drove out the Jewish inhabitants, and left the area "judenrein" (free of Jews) – the first time that concept had been applied since the Nazis created it during their short and bloody reign in Germany. When the Israelis recovered these territories, they rebuilt these villages, created new ones, and built new towns and suburbs to existing cities, especially Jerusalem.

The Arabs decided to call these towns and villages "settlements", with their connotation of illegitimacy and impermanence. The world, including the United States, is much agitated over these population centers and, goaded by the Arabs, declares them to be impediments to peace. What nonsense! Nobody considers the tens of thousands of Arabs who continue to stream to these territories as impediments to peace.

The term "settlements", too, is a propaganda myth created by the Arabs.

> "The Arab propaganda machine has created myths that have been accepted by much of the world. No peace in the Middle East is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are!"

"Refugees". In 1948, when six Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in order to destroy it on the very day of its birth, broadcasts by the advancing Arab armies appealed to the resident Arabs to leave their homes so as not to be in the way of the invaders. As soon as the "quick victory" was won, they could return to their homes and would also enjoy the loot from the Jews, who would have been driven into the sea. It didn't turn out quite that way. Those Arabs who, despite the urgings of the Jews to stay and to remain calm, foolishly left, became refugees. Those who decided not to yield to those blandishments are now, and have been for over 50 years, citizens of Israel, with all the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows.

But what happened to those refugees – by best estimates about 600,000 of them? Did their "Arab brethren" allow them to settle in their countries, to work, and to become productive citizens and useful members of their societies? No! They kept and still keep them, their children, their grandchildren, and in some cases even their great-grandchildren, in miserable "refugee camps", so that they can be used as political and military pawns in order to keep the burning hatred against Israel alive and in order to supply the manpower for the unremitting fight against Israel.

During those more than fifty years, Israel has taken in more than three million Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world and has integrated them productively into its society. According to the "Palestinians", the Arab "refugees" have now marvelously increased to five million(!). It is the intent and fervent desire of the Arabs that all of them should return to Israel so as to destroy the country without the necessity of war.

The "refugees" are a red herring and another myth created by the Arab propaganda machine.

The Arab propaganda machine, aided by the most high-powered public relations firms in the United States and all over, has created myths that, by dint of constant repetition, have been accepted as truth by much of the world. No sensible discussion, no peace in the Middle East, is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are.

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the conversion of people into things, and things into entities with a moral value. Oh yes, and with a commercial value. To be an iconoclast today would be to assert the worth of human beings beyond the marketplace, to become a fine Kantian pain in the ass.

II.

IN *BLONDE*, Joyce Carol Oates has produced a stupefying novel of iconicity. Though Oates has fused some real people into composites, and invented some characters and events out of whole cloth, she has stuck vampirically close to the details of Monroe's biography. She begins with the two-year-old child, and takes us through Monroe's upbringing with her mad mother, and then the mother's institutionalization, and the guardians, and the orphanage. Attempting to embellish chronology with an inner life, driving her narrative not with any kind of plot but with the leitmotifs of innocence, fantasy, sexual exploitation and Hollywood baseness, Oates gets very intimate indeed.

It is something of an accomplishment, to make a novel so riddled with facts and yet so unwarranted in its imaginings. Thus we are there in the bedroom watching Monroe have sex with her first husband, and we are there as she is anally violated by a ruthless Hollywood executive—modeled on Daryl F. Zanuck, who probably never touched Monroe. We are there through Monroe's intense relationship with her first agent, Johnny Hyde, who did all he could for his client, and who is called in this book I.E. Shinn and portrayed as betraying his client in the end. We witness Monroe's marriages to Joe DiMaggio and Arthur Miller, and her dramatic divorces from same. We experience Monroe's menstrual periods, which were supposedly so painful that they kept her in bed and on painkillers for days. There are the drugs, the multiple attempts at having a child and the many miscarriages and abortions, the insanity, JFK and RFK, the pathetic "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" episode, and the suicide—or murder—in Brentwood, at the age of thirty-six. (This is the same Oates who famously complained that a different genre of American writing had become "pathography."

Oates leaves nothing out. She is straining to establish her own vision of America through the reimagination of Monroe's experience. Now, such is the power of icon-making that Monroe's image has become so saturated with public meaning that you simply cannot talk about the literal facts of her life without making her stand for one thing or another, and you cannot treat her artistically without yielding to the astounding facts of her life. This is the wall that Oates has run into. For Monroe became romantically entangled with America's most famous athlete, its most renowned playwright, and its most celebrated political figure. C. Wright Mills once described the structure that ruled American life as a triangle consisting of politics, entertainment, and sports: Monroe was hurt at the most rarefied heights of social power.

Oates has her hands full. The givens of Monroe's life have such a velocity that they slow the imagination down and entice it into taking up the factual slack. So Oates, who is obviously enthralled by Monroe's mystery and elusiveness, ends up plotting her life along the lines of bland socio-cultural-political analysis. Her book is full of mundane cultural notations; she bogs her novel down in a literal and hackneyed thematic framework. Monroe, in *Blonde*, becomes the victim not just of the Kennedys, but of American patriarchy and American hegemony.

These sinister forces are embodied in the character of the Sharpshooter, an enigmatic figure employed by the forces of McCarthyism, who shadows Marilyn throughout the novel: "Yet the Sharpshooter, a practiced professional, is swayed by neither beauty nor power. The Sharpshooter is in the hire of the United States, and beyond the United States in the hire of Justice, Decency, Morality. You could say *in the hire of God*." This demon finally kills her, at the behest of the Kennedys, with an injection of Nembutal.

THIS IS NOT an act of imagining, it is an act of fictionalizing. So great is the lure of the literal to Oates in this book that she will construct a metaphor and then explain it. It is as if she is afraid to stop writing. Early on, Oates has Gladys, Marilyn's insane mother, give Norma Jeane a doll, "a goldenhaired doll, a doll with round blue glass eyes and a rosebud mouth." It is the very image of passivity, an inert fabrication of an unlovely cultural ideal, a thing, an object. Though transparent, it is an adequate image for the girl's adult fate. The rosebud mouth, with its allusion to *Citizen Kane*, is a nice touch. But this is not enough for Oates. She returns to the doll again and again, making the symbolic relationship between Monroe and her childhood toy explicit. ("A misstep, a moment of doubt, and she might fall to the ground limp as a broken doll but this would not happen...' " " 'I like them to kiss me, mostly, and I love to cuddle. Like with a doll. Except I'm the doll.' ") The metaphor gradually becomes a cautionary lesson in the machinery of metaphor.

It is painful to watch Oates trample on her own gifts. Imagining the first time Marilyn posed for nude photographs, Oates has her suddenly become conscious of the vulnerability of her naked feet. " 'Could you p-promise not to show the bottoms? The soles? Of my feet? Otto, please!' " The moment is intrinsically real and modestly poetic, but Oates is not content:

> Why was it so important suddenly? The soles of her feet. Unprotected and vulnerable and exposed. She couldn't bear to think of men staring lewdly at her, and the *proof* of her animal helplessness her pale naked feet.

At times, Oates seems as ardent to be understood as Monroe was ardent to be loved.

OATES USUALLY HAS a strong and adventurous imagination. I don't know of a more powerful evocation of what it must be like to drown than her descriptions of such a death in *Black Water*, her retelling of the Mary Jo Kopechne story. But *Black Water* crumbled under the weight of some of the same flaws that overwhelm *Blonde*. In both books, she stops imagining the particulars and starts thinking the Big Themes.

Oates can slip into an alien experience with a visceral accuracy. No living American writer, except for Norman Mailer, describes violence as skillfully as she does, as in the following passage (marred only by the self-conscious, discordant mimicry of the word "fucker"):

> and without another word Widdoes climbed out of his car and as Norma Jeane looked on in horror calmly unholstered his Smith & Wesson revolver and pistol-whipped the fucker across the face, cracking his nose in a single blow and spraying blood; Clarence sank to his knees on the pavement and Widdoes rammed him on the back of the neck and down goes the fucker like a shot, his legs twitching, and he's out cold.

Oates on sex is a different story. Mailer, in his book about Marilyn, was psychologically licentious and sexually restrained—for all his erotic bravado, he hardly touched on what he thought Monroe's sexual nature might have been. Oates is psychologically restrained, because her sympathy for her subject keeps her from construing Monroe's thoughts as anything other than communiqués from the arche-

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types. But with sex she is poetically licentious.

The hardest challenges to artistic representation are the ability to convey irony in music, to draw a horse in motion or an infant sleeping, and to describe the sexual act in words without being solemn or pornographic or risible ("I hovered over her buttocks like a skydiver..."). In *Blonde*, Oates is crudely invasive where she thinks she is artistically daring. She hurls herself at Monroe's sexual experience again and again, as if to win back her subject's sexuality from the clutches of the male sensibility; but in their literalness, and in their self-congratulatory tone, and in their mock-objectivity, these sexual passages are hard to read:

> Never had he weighed so much and never was his weight so dense, so furious. His penis was a thick squat rod that prodded against her belly, blindly at first... Taking hold then of Elsie's wrists and stretching her flailing arms perpendicular to her sides... pumping with furious yet methodical strokes and she would see in the dark his sweaty face contorted, lips drawn back from his teeth in a grimace...

> he kissed her between the legs, rubbing, nudging, poking, in a rhythm like a giant pulse, Norma Jeane's legs twined about his head and shoulders desperately, she was beginning to buck her hips, beginning to come, so Eddy quick and deft as if he'd practiced such a maneuver many times shifted his position to crouch over her, as Cass was now crouching over her head, and both men penetrated her, Cass's slender penis in her mouth, Eddy's thicker penis in her vagina, pumping into her swiftly and unerringly until Norma Jeane screamed as she'd never screamed in her life...

The passage has Monroe cavorting with two men who are also homosexual lovers, and they are the only ones able to give this woman, so injured by straight male appetites, sexual pleasure. ("God she missed them. Her Gemini lovers. Through two boring marriages to good decent heterosexual men.") The execution of the idea, which is entirely Oates's invention so far as I know, is fairly wild. And yet it is also wholly unexciting, banal, the boilerplate of one strand of contemporary sexual discourse.

Oates has always piled on the Big Themes in her fiction, but in *Blonde* they come more rapidly and thickly than ever before. In a sense, this novel is an unwitting case study in how celebrity resists artistic treatment. The book proves that it is pointless to compose a representation of a representation. As soon as art's particularities-without-end touch such a pseudo-reality, they balloon into reiterations of inflated meaning. Oates's enterprise is like running a red crayon over the contours of a marble frieze. For all her abundant inventiveness, after hundreds of pages, you know only what you knew all along, that Marilyn Monroe lived out an American nightmare in the guise of an American dream.

III.

Oates's massive book appears at a peculiar moment in the career of the American imagination. Decades of accelerated consumerism have had a dramatic influence on the arts. From every corner, the society summons the self to acquire and to expand, to be other things, to be all things, to inhabit any form of life that it wishes to inhabit. The result in the realm of art is a near-total collapse, to stay just with literature, of genres. Biographies get made up, fiction resorts more and more to the facts, memoir bleeds into fiction, fiction blurs into memoir, the novel takes up the work of biography. It used to be said that the difficulty for the contemporary novel is that the imagination cannot compete with contemporary reality. Now the imagination hardly bothers to try.

Oates's identification with Monroe is extraordinary. Her grand theme of people down on their luck, born in the midst of nowhere, struggling through cruelty and violence and mistreatment to advance in life, is a dominating element in her writing; and in Monroe she has found the real-life counterpart to her ruling obsession. That is why *Blonde* runs on so long. Its real subject is the nature of Oates's own potent yet lurid fascinations. It is not a novel; it is a document of its author's temperament. Though interminable, it never really begins.

Carl E. Rollyson Jr., in his splendid critical biography of Monroe, describes how she would incessantly regard herself in the mirror. Monroe herself recounted, maybe apocryphally, the time when the superintendent of her orphanage powdered the child's face and had her look at her reflection. "This was the first time in my life I felt loved—no one had ever noticed my face or hair or me before." For Rollyson, as for Mailer and Oates, the mirror-incident was the first stage in Marilyn's schizoid division of her identity into the damaged Norma Jeane and the actor Marilyn Monroe. Reading Rollyson's book, which Oates generously acknowledges having done, must have been a fateful encounter for her. Thirty years ago, she began her novel *Them* in this way:

> One warm even in August 1937, a girl in love stood before a mirror. Her name was Loretta. It was her reflection in the mirror she loved, and out of this dreamy, pleasing love there arose a sense of excitement that was restless and blind—which way would it move, what would happen? Her name was Loretta; she was pleased with that name too, though Loretta Botsworth pleased less. Her last name dragged down on her, it had no melody.

Them, like *Blonde*, like many of Oates's books, is also a novel based on fact. It is about a girl named Maureen, Loretta's daughter, who inherits her mother's "sense of excitement" about her future, as well as Loretta's sense of being dragged down. Maureen, in other words, is an early phase of the Marilyn of *Blonde*. Like many of Oates's characters, Maureen learns how to survive by playing roles, or by acquiring new lives like playing a role. Oates herself inhabits her characters as much like an actor as like a writer. The note of mimicry—as in the word "fucker" in the violent passage I quoted above—often appears in her third-person descriptions. She cannot help jumping into her characters' heads and speaking their language even during the most neutral, impassive exposition. This is one of the tricks of the trade, of course—but fictionally re-animating the lives of real people is closer to what an actor does with a part that she has been given than to what a novelist does with characters that she has made.

It is no wonder, then, that acting is the dominant theme of *Blonde*. And this is the real value of Oates's virtuoso failure of a novel. Putting quotes from Stanislavsky and the acting teachers Mabel Todd and Michael Chekhov at the head of some chapters, making up her own handbooks to acting and then quoting from them (some of these fictional precepts are very striking: "Your life outside the stage is not your accidental life. It will be defined as inevitable"), Oates sees acting at the heart of American identity. Submerged in this extravagant, purposeless, forceful calamity of a book is a powerfully intriguing image of a collective obsession with Hollywood actors, with a profession that may in some way be the exemplary American activity.

For there really was a Marilyn Monroe. She was not an icon, or a celebrity, or a tragic-symbolic amalgamation. She was an actor. And there is a reason to remember her as an actor. A moment occurs at the beginning of *The Misfits* that throws light on exactly why Monroe has become the cynosure of serious scrutiny. There

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are, first, the background details. Arthur Miller, realizing that his marriage to Marilyn was on the skids after the disastrous months in England making *The Prince and the Showgirl*—Monroe and her co-star Laurence Olivier despised each other—and after her affair with Yves Montand, sat down to write a farewell script for her. It was the "ultimate motion picture" in the words of its producer, because its movie-star actors—Monroe, Clark Gable, Montgomery Clift—both play their characters and themselves more explicitly than actors had ever done in an American film.

Monroe plays Roslyn, the lonely, broken-hearted woman from back East, who has arrived in Reno to get a divorce. She is staying with another divorcée, the older Isabelle (Thelma Ritter). A mechanic, Guido (Eli Wallach), finds himself strongly attracted to Roslyn, and he introduces her to his friend Gay, played by Gable. Soon the four of them drive out to Guido's house in the desert. At the house, Guido plays some wild jazz on the phonograph. After maudlinly and manipulatively reminiscing about his dead wife to Roslyn, he begins to dance with her. Isabelle, who has her arm in a cast and a sling, stands watching. The music gets wilder, and Guido dances closer and closer, leering and spinning Roslyn around. Gay, sitting in a chair, grins and watches with bright, feral eyes. A sense of menace hangs all about the vulnerable Roslyn. A hurt could befall her, these men could do something brutal to her out there in the wilderness.

Then everything changes. Roslyn says something sharp and hurtful to Guido about his wife, and about the true nature of his relations with his wife. He stares at her helplessly and his entire body sags. Isabelle starts beating time to the music with a knife on her cast. The party ends with Guido chastened and reduced, and Roslyn powerful and safe. In a matter of minutes, in other words, Monroe has gone from being defenseless as a lost child to being a sly, even dangerous adult. It is as if she has used the damaged part of her being to expose Guido's own damaged self. She has made her wound into a weapon. (Miller has Isabelle driving the rhythm of the scene with a knife on her injured arm.) The lesson is that Monroe was *not* merely a victim. One of her acting teachers, who was also a beloved friend, remarked about her that "whenever she explained something, her right hand darted forward, weaving to the left and right like a serpent. It was a gesture of evasiveness and survival through expediency."

Perhaps Miller wrote Monroe into the role of Roslyn because he knew that she only came alive as an actor when her real life flickered in her fictions. Perhaps he also understood that, for the American movie audience, films come supremely alive as fictions when they wink at their actors' offscreen actuality. This convention of American movies speaks to the weird boundlessness of American dreams. Americans dream without limits; a practical people, we make dreams into plans, and so we attempt to fuse our imaginations with our obligations, to displace our factual selves with our fantasy selves. We love movies so much because they embody this unreality of American reality, its illusion that we can become so large in life that other people will talk about what we appear to be in public as though they were talking about who we really are in private. We do not only fear the invasion of our privacy; we also hunger for it. That is why the the barrier between interior life and exterior life is crumbling in America.

Monroe's doctors ruled that Monroe had a splintered personality, and could barely distinguish between the inside of her head and the world around her. In her very soul, in other words, she was an actor. When she acted, she always played herself; and so she became the perfect picture of the unreality of American reality. In *The Seven Year Itch*, Tom Ewell wonders aloud if the seductive Monroe character is really Marilyn Monroe. The remark is not what it seems. It does not refer inward, to movies; it refers outward, to life. No film actor has ever torn down the barrier between the inner and the outer as devastatingly, and as delightfully, as Monroe. For this reason, she was also a pioneer in allowing the (respectable) silver screen to acknowledge the fact of sex.

Monroe's artificiality always shows itself; that's how she establishes her authenticism. Out of her greatness as an illusion, the abused woman made herself into a great disabuser by repeatedly puncturing her own illusion. And so Monroe's face, that white, blank, fluid face, sparkling with wounds, still speaks to us—not as the face of an icon, but as the face of a particular American woman who endured, and worked with, an unprecedented degree of unreality, and wants to say something about it. Her face wants to say that it is a worthless job of work to stay with unreality for too long. It wants to say, Desire me but do not follow me. It wants to say, Go back to life. ■

The Geist Man

By CHARLES LARMORE

Hegel: A Biography by Terry Pinkard

(Cambridge University Press, 780 pp., $39.95)

"NOBODY HAS EVER understood me," Hegel was reported to have said on his deathbed, "nobody except for one man, and even he didn't understand me." In his monumental biography, Terry Pinkard assures us that this story is baseless, a canard spread by the anti-Hegel reaction that set in soon after the great philosopher died in Berlin at the height of his fame during the cholera epidemic of 1831. Still, these last words match the impression that many readers have had of Hegel's thought over the past two centuries. His philosophy has seemed to be of supreme importance, yet few have come away from his writings with a firm sense of what he was trying to say.

Even those bold enough to believe they had a handle on such central Hegelian terms as *Geist* ("Mind" or "Spirit") and *Der Begriff* (or "the Concept") have rarely agreed about what they mean. Did Hegel see the individual as responsible for his thoughts and deeds, or did he dissolve the individual into the community? Did his "absolute idealism" entail that everything is a part of Mind, or did it allow for a world independent of thought? Did he imagine that history had come to an end in him, or did he realize that his own philosophy would one day appear to be a thing of the past? Did he embrace the tenets of Lutheran orthodoxy, or instead a pantheism that denied any ultimate distinction between man and God? Was he a defender of liberal freedoms, or an apologist for the Prussian state? These ques-

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tions remain controversial, and there are as many different Hegels as there are interpreters of his System.

The premise of any intellectual biography is that the life illuminates the work, and Pinkard does well on this score, though not quite in the way he intends. In Hegel's development, he claims, the biographical cannot be pried apart from the philosophical. But the picture that emerges from Pinkard's volume is of a man who did his utmost to keep the two apart—a man who, as his own son remarked, led a double existence. In day-to-day life, Hegel eschewed the higher realms of thought, playing cards for hours with unphilosophical friends, drinking fine French wines, and conducting himself as a conscientious husband and father. "I have now reached my earthly goal," he exclaimed upon his marriage in 1811. "What more does one want in this world than an official post and a dear wife?"

In his writing and teaching, on the other hand, Hegel studiously avoided all reference to himself. Like most philosophers, he had little to say about his likes and dislikes; but more strikingly still, he conveyed nothing about his own activity of doing philosophy. He never talked as though he had a problem before him that he had to solve. Nor did he ever reveal any hesitation about the ideas that he defended or admit the temptations of opposing views. He never let on to having changed his mind.

Hegel seems to have found in philosophy what T.S. Eliot found in poetry: an escape from personality. Proper philosophical method, he liked to say, consists in following the inner movement of the subject matter, not in taking up an attitude toward it. Few "As I said before"'s or "I will come back to this later"'s signpost his writings. He was one of the great historians of philosophy, who shed real light on the quandaries of other philosophers; but he did not speak as one who had wrestled with thought himself. Though his grand theme was the path by which the human mind, or *Geist*, has come to recognize no higher authority than itself, his own struggle toward self-understanding formed no part of the tale. Hegel thought that he had scored a point against Schelling when he quipped that his former friend "had carried out his philosophical education in public." Where else, we might wonder, is a philosopher likely to get one? Yet Hegel never presented himself as having had to learn the truths that he now set forth. It was *Geist* that had learned them, and he was but its scribe.

In reality, though, this Olympian posture hid from view an intellectual career marked by many bumps and turns, which Pinkard charts with an expert hand. Intellectually, Hegel was a late bloomer. He arrived slowly at the views—and the self-confidence—that he expressed in the major books that he published, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), *The Science of Logic* (1812–1816), the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817, 1827), and *The Philosophy of Right* (1820). All the same, signs of a dissociation between the life and the mind appear already in his Swabian youth, when he was a seminary student in Tübingen. His nickname was the "the old man," so earnest and austere were his intellectual habits—but he also earned a reputation for haunting the neighborhood taverns. One night, staggering back to his rooms, he provoked the porter to complain, "Oh Hegel, you're surely going to drink away what little intelligence you have!"

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L. Sebbers, lithograph of G.W.F. Hegel

When the eighteen-year-old Hegel arrived in Tübingen in 1788 to study theology, his aim was to become not a pastor, but an educator of the people and a man of letters. Devoted to the Enlightenment ideal of bringing reason to bear on human affairs, he wanted to promote an undogmatic form of Christianity that would engage the hearts of the people, overcome the divisions of modern life, and renew the bonds of community. He saw himself as a follower of Rousseau, not as a follower of Kant, whose sundering of reason from emotion and history seemed to him an arid and esoteric doctrine.

Indeed, systematic philosophy was not at the time a part of Hegel's ambitions. At the Tübingen seminary or *Stift*, he became close friends with the two men who would change his life forever, Hölderlin and Schelling. But their decisive influence came only afterwards. The three classmates followed enthusiastically the progress of the French Revolution (Pinkard informs us, alas, that the story of their dancing around a revolutionary maypole during the Reign of Terror is also just a legend), but Hegel did not share his comrades' budding interest in philosophical speculation, and he did not join the reading group in Kant that they attended.

AFTER GRADUATION, the three went their separate ways. Hölderlin began to write a visionary poetry of extraordinary power, but having become a tutor for a family near Jena in 1794, he also attended Fichte's lectures at the university. Fichte was arguing that Kant had failed to develop a proper theory of subjectivity, and though Hölderlin agreed, he worked out important reasons for going beyond Fichte as well. Meanwhile Schelling shot off on a meteoric career that brought him as a professor to Jena in 1798 at the precocious age of 23, and after Fichte's dismissal the following year on charges of atheism, he was already being touted as the new heavyweight in German philosophy.

And Hegel? He had taken a position as tutor to a family in the dreary Swiss town of Bern, cut off from the intellectual ferment that gripped his friends. In Bern he started to take Kant's philosophy seriously. His friends had begun to call into question its basic assumptions, but he was content to apply it to his ongoing concern with the idea of popular religion. He portrayed Jesus as a Kantian hero, who saw that salvation lies in living by a moral law we give ourselves, but whose teachings were betrayed by the "positive" or authoritarian institutions of Christianity.

Hegel was rescued from Swiss exile in 1797, when Hölderlin, now living near Frankfurt, wrote to say that he had found him a much more congenial position. Not only would he live as a tutor in the family of a wine merchant, but the two friends

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would be reunited. "You will be the old man once again!" At the time, Hölderlin was involved in an ill-starred romance with Susette Gontard, the wife of his former employer, and her death five years later would plunge him into the madness from which he never recovered. Upon arriving in Frankfurt, Hegel put himself at their disposal, carrying letters and arranging trysts.

But his main occupation was playing philosophical catch-up. From Hölderlin he learned that, far from esoteric or obvious, the first principles of Kant's and Fichte's philosophies were as doubtful as the consequences of revising them were momentous. The subject cannot enjoy an immediate sort of acquaintance with itself, as Fichte supposed, because in saying "I" we distinguish ourselves from whatever may be the object of our attention. Thus, Hölderlin continued, we can recognize ourselves as our object, in moments of self-reflection, only if we are one with ourselves in a way that lies deeper than our saying "I"—that is, only if we see ourselves as part of a larger whole. Subjectivity cannot be understood in its own terms, but only in terms of a more encompassing totality.

Hölderlin's argument was an eye-opener for Hegel. He could not go on simply applying Kantian or Fichtean principles, for they were essentially flawed. In Frankfurt, he reworked his conception of the true Christianity, now denying that Jesus was anything like a Kantian. A person who imposes a law on himself has not escaped domination, he has only internalized it, "carrying his master in himself, and being at the same time his own slave." We cannot be reconciled with ourselves except by feeling at one with our community, he concluded, combining Hölderlin's theory with Jesus's teaching that love, not law, is our salvation.

Beyond this change of view, moreover, Hegel's very sense of himself underwent a dramatic shift. He no longer thought of becoming a man of letters. (After all, he had published virtually nothing.) And he wanted to direct his energies to more fundamental topics than religion. Systematic philosophy was now his passion, and his leading idea was the notion that he had learned from Hölderlin: subjectivity's dependence upon a deeper unity of mind and world.

As Hegel's thinking took a speculative turn, he left behind the easygoing prose of his theological manuscripts and adopted the forbidding style for which he is notorious. His writing became a jungle of abstractions with a life of their own, which interact and pass into one another as though they, not the minds that they occupy, were the real engine of thought. Pinkard suggests that this development, too, shows Hölderlin's influence. Just as the poet stretched the resources of language to express a new, more heightened sensibility, so Hegel sought a philosophical idiom that would prevent the reader from relaxing into everyday certainties.

Here Pinkard goes astray, for it was precisely on the question of language that Hegel diverged altogether from his mentor. Hölderlin's poetry never forsook the personal voice, remaining troubled to the end by "the use of poets in a barren age." At the same time, he saw in poetry deeper possibilities than philosophy could ever achieve. We cannot stand back enough from our essential oneness with the world to make it an object of knowledge, Hölderlin believed, but the poet's speech can intimate what words cannot nail down. And Hegel would have none of this.

Reality, in Hegel's view, yields to discursive reason without remainder. Every truth, as he would later say, has its proper place in the development of the Concept. The whole upon which our thinking depends is not some elusive unity of Being, as Hölderlin supposed, but a community of thought, historically situated and shaped by a set of guiding principles. Hegel's new style reflected not his debt to Hölderlin but his own cult of impersonality, combined with the general decline in philosophical prose beginning with Kant.

From early on, the program of "going beyond Kant" had in fact taken Kant's own bad writing as the pretext for a fashionable obscurity. Difficult subjects require a difficult style, or so Fichte and his successors assumed. They forgot that clarity is not a mere embellishment of the intellect; it is the very heart of intellectual virtue. Our thinking remains confused so long as we do not make it plain how someone else could show that we are wrong. But Hegel felt right at home with the opposite notion, then in vogue, that philosophy must resist the false comforts of ordinary speech. We need not go so far as to say with Schopenhauer that Hegel's style is "a lasting monument to German stupidity" in order to agree that it holds nothing of value.

To become a philosopher like Kant or Fichte, Hegel had to find a university position. In 1800 he wrote to Schelling, now an academic success, to ask what might be done for him. Remembering their old friendship, Schelling invited him to Jena and took him under his wing. The next year Hegel published a short book on the differences between Fichte and Schelling, which did a lot to boost his friend's prestige, and the two began to edit a philosophy journal together. Hegel's new career had gotten off to a good start.

Yet a rocky road lay ahead. Jena was no longer the hub of German culture that it had been when Schiller and Fichte lectured at the university, and Novalis and the two Schlegels, Friedrich and August, more or less launched the Romantic movement, and Goethe presided over all the excitement from nearby Weimar. The glorious '90s were over. Fichte was fired. Schelling himself was about to leave because of a scandalous affair with Caroline Schlegel, August's wife. Caroline had already tried to have him engaged to her daughter from a previous marriage, and when the daughter died—some said because her illness had been treated according to Schelling's own "philosophy of nature," others said because Caroline had murdered her to get rid of a rival—Schelling concluded that it was time to go.

On top of all this, Hegel's own relationship with Schelling had quickly soured, for he had begun to show too much independence of mind for his friend's taste. After Schelling's departure, Hegel labored on at Jena as an unpaid lecturer, writing much but publishing nothing, and increasingly despondent about his career and financial situation. Finally in 1807, just as Napoleon's armies were gathering around Jena, he sent off to the publisher the last pages of the great book with which he ended his five-year silence, *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

There are few topics that Hegel's masterpiece does not take up. But its motley of chapters, ranging from the historical (Greek religion, the Enlightenment) to the universal (the battle for recognition between Self and Other, the observation of nature), all serve a single theme. *The Phenomenology of Mind* is the epic of the mind's growth, measured by the light of its own endeavors, not by an external standard such as God's point of view or Reality itself. Thought, Hegel held, progresses according to an inner logic. We always operate with some idea of the mind's proper relation to the world, some conception of how we ought to think and act, which appears to make sense of our experience. But then we discover its shortcomings, as we realize that it founders in its own terms. (We have no other standards, after all, at our disposal.) The goals that it embodies turn out to conflict with what we learn about ourselves and our situation when we follow it through.

But our failure is not a dead end. It is the way forward. By readjusting means and ends at the points where we went wrong, we can construct a more coherent view of mind and world. Of course, this

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view too, though an improvement, will go on to meet the same fate. And so, once again, we will have to "look the negative in the face" and pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. Mind, Hegel declared in his preface, "does not shrink from death and keep itself untouched by devastation. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself."

The Phenomenology of Mind lays out a panorama of the different conceptions by which man has tried to grasp his place in the world. Yet it does not tour this "picture gallery" of the human spirit simply to visit the errors of bygone times. Its aim is to reconstruct the indispensable path by which our own self-understanding has been achieved. In learning about the world, we have also learned how to learn, progressively clarifying the powers of the mind. In this sense, Hegel was the consummate empiricist, strange as that may sound. The principles of thought and action that we acknowledge are not self-evident; they are not available from the start. They are the fruit of experience, no less than our other beliefs. Their authority has an essentially historical character, since it consists in their faring better where previous principles have fallen apart.

THIS DEVELOPMENTAL VISION of reason was Hegel's finest philosophical insight. Yet he supposed that his very ability to formulate this vision of the mind's voyage of self-discovery brought reason's history to a close. Our place in the world had shown itself to be ultimately determined by principles of our own devising, which stand the tests that we, and we alone, impose upon them. Everything that is Substance, he announced, had been recognized to be Subject. Naturally, the details of these principles had still to be worked out, and that was business that he left for a Science of Logic (his next book). But the "phenomenology" of mind, or the string of different ways that the mind can "appear" to itself, was now complete. In the past, the life of the mind may have been "the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk." Now the party was over, and we have awakened clearheaded in the light of the Absolute.

Hegel was not the first philosopher to claim that philosophy ends with him. Still, his way of wanting to have the last word gave a new twist to the old conceit. Hölderlin's lesson that subjectivity draws on a larger whole had acquired in his hands an historicized form. We take our intellectual and moral bearings, in Hegel's account, from a general conception of mind's place in the world that represents the self-understanding of our community. If our conception is then the ultimate conception, there remains little room for individual initiative. It cannot be any thinker's job to argue the community into a deeper view. The philosopher can only be an underlaborer to this final stage of the development of *Geist*. Here, then, was a theoretical rationale for the impersonality to which Hegel aspired. Philosophy had come to an end in him, not because he had provided definitive solutions to existing problems, but because *Geist* had done so. His merit was to record the achievement.

Pinkard endorses the view that we have no other choice but to regard the principles of thought and action as principles of our own design. In this sense, Hegel was right: Mind is the Absolute. Though the world contains, obviously enough, other things than just minds, mind is in the end its own authority, autonomously imposing on itself the norms by which it will deal with the world. Pinkard makes this "radical modernism" the core of Hegel's philosophy, and thus he has written a very different biography from the one that Karl Rosenkranz, working at the behest of Hegel's widow, published in 1844.

For Rosenkranz, Hegel was a quintessentially national thinker, who combined "Swabian profundity" with "Prussian intellect" and produced a philosophy worthy of a unified German people. His biography played an influential role in creating the image of Hegel as a champion of German nationalism. Pinkard does not attack Rosenkranz directly, but he provides more than enough evidence to dispel this myth. Hegel liked to joke that *Deutschtum* is *deutschdumm*. He mocked the Romantics' prattle about the German *Volk*, and loathed the anti-Semitism to which nationalist professors and student clubs often gave vent. (His protégé and close friend in Berlin was Eduard Gans, a prominent Jewish intellectual. Hegel defended him against the Law Faculty, which refused to appoint a Jew.) He had a lifelong love for France, and every July 14 he drank to the fall of the Bastille.

PINKARD'S MODERNIST PORTRAIT is certainly truer to the original, and it presents us with a more sympathetic figure. Even so, Hegel's notion of modernity is on two counts far less helpful than Pinkard supposes. First, Pinkard underplays the extent to which autonomy for Hegel applied less to individuals than to *Geist*. According to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel's last great work, individuals are to their common ethical life as accidents are to the substance in which they inhere. Pinkard favors thinking of *Geist* as "mindedness," as though it were simply a feature of individual minds, taken severally. In fact, Hegel conceived the relation

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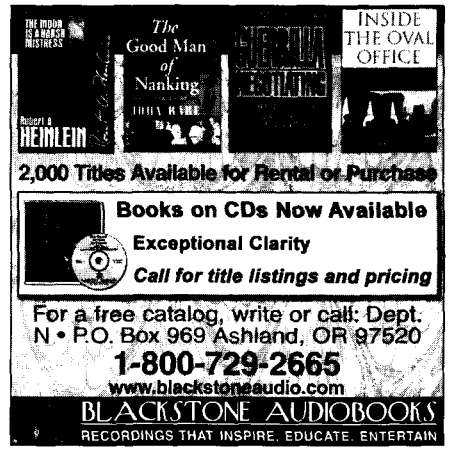
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of dependence the other way around: properly speaking, the norms by which we live are constructed not by you and I working together, but by all of us as the community that we already are, as the stage of *Geist* that we represent. Such is the model that impelled him to say that thinking well is following the movement of the subject matter itself, not taking up a point of view. It is the conception that answered to his philosophical horror of personality.

Second, there is the question whether a theory that makes reason a matter of autonomy (individual or collective) can prove convincing. Surely we are rational to the extent that we are moved by reasons, guided in our beliefs and actions by principles of reasoning whose authority we acknowledge. We modify and refine our grasp of these principles in the course of experience, as Hegel rightly saw. Yet this is a process in which we do not so much invent as discover the way we ought to think and act. Rationality, therefore, has a responsive dimension, which is hard to square with the idea that it consists in imposing principles on ourselves.

Hegel believed that, with the conviction that mind is the author of its own rules, our self-understanding has achieved its ultimate shape. In reality, however, the "phenomenology" of mind goes on, for despite its enduring popularity, the idea of autonomy cannot explain the nature of reason. Autonomy makes sense when it means that we do not want someone else to tell us what to do, but want to figure it out for ourselves. Pumped up as a general account of reason itself, however, autonomy is more a symptom than a valid ideal. It expresses the moment when man no longer looks to someone else—namely, to God—to find his intellectual and moral principles. Yet precisely this theological debate about who makes the rules, God or man, a debate in which Hegel also took part, is one we would do well to put behind us. Then we can face up to the real problem that remains, the relation between the mind and the reasons that it discerns.

The Steps of Positano

Would it be wrong to call this sadness?
The overcast sky simmers above the water.
Without a breeze, the brackish air collects
on the steps, surrounds the young man sitting there.
Who cares that the architecture is Roman,
these rotting steps speckled with mold?
The late light settles on everything equally,
and this man, transfixed by the water in the distance,
cares nothing for the eternity of Rome.
Somewhere, his beloved moves cargo around a ship,
catches himself, at times, staring out at the ocean.
At the seaside, at the Spiaggia Grande,
the small-crested waves keep arriving.
Sometimes, a mast is seen traversing the horizon ...
Would it be wrong to call this sadness?

C. Dale Young

HEGEL'S ACADEMIC CAREER took a long time to accord with his philosophical accomplishment. The *Phenomenology* appeared in print just after he had left his dead-end job in Jena to become a newspaper editor in Bamberg. He published his *Logic* while rector of a Gymnasium (or high school) in Nuremberg. It was not until 1816 that he managed to secure a professorship in Heidelberg, and then two years later he finally made it: he was named to Fichte's chair at the University of Berlin. Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of law, religion, art, and world history became a great intellectual and social event in the Prussian capital.

This success was all the more remarkable given the appalling awkwardness of Hegel's speaking style. Coughing, gasping, stuttering, moving his arms erratically, he began every third sentence with "thus" (or was it every third part of a sentence, his students wondered as they counted up the "thus"'s in the lecture), and he laced the whole with a thick Swabian accent. Early in his career, Hegel had developed a speech impediment that struck when he was speaking in a formal setting, though it vanished when he was among friends. It may have been one more sign of the disjunction between his person and his persona.

Hegel was eager to come to Berlin for more than professional reasons. Prussia stood at the vanguard of political reform. The king and his ministers seemed ready to promote the sort of constitutional monarchy embodying republican principles (careers open to talent, the abolition of feudal bonds) that Hegel favored. Also, the university, founded in 1809, was a self-consciously modern institution that made philosophy, not theology, the central faculty. Shortly after Hegel's arrival, however, the forces of reaction began to get the upper hand. The assassination of the ultraconservative playwright August von Kotzebue by a republican-minded student was the pretext for the Karlsbad decrees of 1819, according to which the expression of opinions hostile to the state became grounds for dismissal from a university position. Many of Hegel's students and teaching assistants ran into difficulty with these decrees, and Hegel himself began to think twice about what he said and wrote. He tried to cut a middle course between submission and revolt, but as often in such cases, he grew to be distrusted by both sides.

His *Philosophy of Right* appeared in 1820, and it contained in its preface a momentous and ambiguous assertion: "What is rational is actual, and what is actual is rational." For many, this statement confirmed Hegel's servility to the powers that be, though he meant only that our reasons for action cannot be purely utopian, but must be rooted in a form of life that we share with others. Some years later Hegel confided to the poet Heine, who was then his student, that the phrase really signified that "everything that is rational must be." Those were dangerous words, and Hegel looked over his shoulder to make sure that only his card-playing friends were listening. In general, he kept a low profile. His most notable acts of resistance were to protest publicly the arrest of the French philosopher Victor Cousin as a revolutionary agitator, and to shout encouraging words (in Latin!) from a skiff in the river Spree to one of his imprisoned teaching assistants.

In 1830, a cholera epidemic broke out in Russia and began to move westward, reaching Berlin the following year. On November 13, Hegel began to complain of severe stomach pains, and the next day he was dead. The doctors diagnosed the cause of death as cholera, and such has been the story ever since. But Pinkard claims that this is another Hegel legend to be discarded. Hegel displayed none of the awful symptoms (diarrhea, swelling) that make up the normal course of the disease. The doctors themselves spoke of "intensive" cholera for just this reason. Moreover, Hegel had been in increasingly bad health ever since his trip to Paris in 1827, when he had fallen ill with acute indigestion from eating in restaurants. During the last year of his life, he suffered from chest pains and his face became completely white, probably from a form of anemia. Pinkard concludes that Hegel died as a result of some upper gastrointestinal condition. Perhaps it was French cooking that did him in. ■

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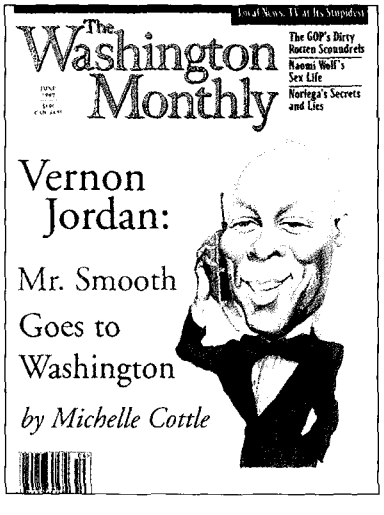

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Roots

SO I'M STANDING AT A CROSSwalk in Dupont Circle, waiting for the light to change, when the guy next to me does a double take, peeks up over the top of his painfully hip sunglasses, and asks, "Has anyone ever told you that you look like Hillary Clinton?" Now, when a strange man whips out the "Did anyone ever tell you . . . ?" line, more often than not it's a come-on, a pathetic variation on "Haven't we met somewhere before?" In this case, however, a sexual advance seemed unlikely. For starters, I'm pretty sure the guy was gay. Granted, I don't presume to possess some sort of finely calibrated gaydar like the guys on "Will & Grace" (or, for that matter, John McCain). But there is a distinct gay aesthetic that many of the men in my neighborhood cultivate, and this chap had it.

MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, HE WAS NOT the first stranger to draw the Hillary comparison. I've had young men approach me on the Metro; middle-aged women accost me in restaurants. And inevitably, having noted the resemblance, the person will follow up with a sheepish look and some sort of apology or qualifier. ("Oh, but you're *much* younger/thinner/paler/whatever.") The backpedaling is particularly revealing. I mean, after seven-plus years, threescore hairdos, and a full-body makeover, Hil has turned out to be a reasonably hot mama. Sure, she's no Jackie O. But I don't see why people, upon suggesting that I resemble her, so often look stricken, as though they've committed some unpardonable social blunder. (Aside from disturbing a complete stranger's dinner, that is.) Maybe it's because I'm more than 20 years younger than Hillary. Or maybe her polarizing persona has made the mere invocation of her name seem somehow inflammatory. ("Oh, yeah? Well, *you* look like Nancy Reagan!") Or maybe people worry that, by suggesting a physical similarity, they're somehow condemning me to a parallel fate—a life of high-profile serial humiliation at the hands of a pathological slam hound.

MY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES REJECT such comparisons and are, in fact, invariably insulted on my behalf—which is odd, considering how many of them are Democrats. (Hillary ambivalence, it seems, transcends party lines.) I don't really see the resemblance either, although I have now obsessed about this phenomenon enough to formulate a totally specious theory as to its roots: It all has to do with hair color. To the vast majority of men and a good chunk of women, all blondes look alike. I exaggerate only slightly. At the very least, each blonde reminds people of two or three other blondes that they've seen somewhere before. People are forever informing me of whom I look like. Sometimes it's someone famous (Jodie Foster, Joan Lunden, Joan Rivers). Sometimes it's their second cousin Judy, who weighs 195 pounds, wears an eye patch, and walks with a pronounced limp—but has hair of a shade almost identical to mine. Don't ask me how such visual connections get made. It may be that, despite the proliferation of bottle blondes, fair hair is still enough of a novelty that it overrides other physical characteristics such as height, weight, nose size, or facial scars. I suspect redheads regularly endure a similarly annoying ritual.

I REALIZE THAT THIS SORT OF THING happens to almost everyone on occasion. It's human nature to seek out the familiar in the unknown. What's more, people in our society live in a perpetual state of celebrity alert, praying that someday they'll look over and find themselves seated next to Garth Brooks at the local Olive Garden. The desire is so great that many folks begin to see celebs everywhere, even in the features of random noncelebrities. And since I live in Washington, D.C., as opposed to Los Angeles or Las Vegas, the Hillary thing has a certain geographical logic. Who is the most famous blonde that patriotic tourists and even jaded residents of the District are predisposed to look out for on the streets of our nation's capital—at least when she's not cruising the Stop 'N' Shop in Chappaqua? This may also explain why, among the Beltway crowd, I've been told more than once that I look a little like Peggy Noonan.

STILL, THERE'S SOMETHING PECULIAR to blondes that prompts people to generalize. (There is, for instance, no such thing as a dumb-redhead joke.) I was reminded of this tiresome cultural tendency when a reporter from the *New York Post* called for input on an article he was writing about whether it is easier to become a TV pundit if you are blonde. The impetus for this groundbreaking investigation was a May 25 piece in *The Washington Post* profiling a perky young pundette who came across as so spectacularly mindless and vapid that a colleague of mine was convinced the piece was a spoof—the pundette a fictional personification of the prevailing journalistic zeitgeist, in which a compelling TV presence trumps all. A profile of one blonde dingbat, of course, necessitated a piece about blonde dingbats in general.

TALKING TO THE *NEW YORK POST* reporter, I felt compelled to dispute a couple of points. Number one, I don't really qualify as a pundit. I get called in by the chat shows only under the most desperate of circumstances—say, when all of the A-list babblers have fled to the Maryland shore for the weekend. But the sheer number of programming hours now dedicated to political verbiage requires every Beltway resident to do at least one show per month. Word around town is that, with election season heating up, NBC is lobbying Congress to make such appearances mandatory, like jury duty.

I ALSO POINTED OUT THAT, IN DETERmining which pundettes regularly grace the small screen, hair color is unquestionably less important than general attractiveness. (Most producers deny that appearance plays a big part in whom they book. This is a fib on the magnitude of "I did not have sexual relations with that woman.") There are more than a few dark-haired hotties on the pundette circuit who don't seem appreciably less vapid than their blonde counterparts. And, although the aggressively towheaded Ann Coulter and Kellyanne Fitzpatrick get scads of buzz, it is as much for their simplistic political outlook and unreflective, in-your-face style as for their lemon-yellow tresses.

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT I'M SIMPLY BITter about not yet having discovered a way to leverage my alleged resemblance to Washington's most famous blonde. I don't get particularly good access to Hillary's Senate campaign, and, disappointingly, the likeness isn't strong enough to entitle me to my own Secret Service detail. Essentially, I get all of the annoying comments with none of the perks. But, happily, in just a few more months Bill Clinton will be out of a job and Hillary will be just another Westchester hausfrau (or senator). With that in mind, I should probably start pulling for George W. and his brunette better half to win in November. Otherwise, the next four to eight years of my life will be an endless succession of strangers disrupting my dinner to ask, "Has anyone ever told you that you look like Tipper Gore?"

MICHELLE COTTLE

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